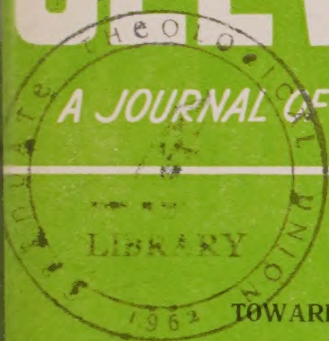


JEEVADHARA

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION



TOWARDS AN INDIAN ECCLESIOLOGY

PNEUMA AND CHARISMA IN THE INDIAN CHURCH

V. Francis Vineeth

ECCLESIOLOGY IN THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT OF INDIA

John B. Chethimattam

AN INCULTURATED ECCLESIOLOGY

Thomas Manickam

IDEA OF A SALVIFIC COMMUNITY IN THE BHAGAVAD GITA

S. Painadath

BULLETIN: THE ECCLESIAL STRUCTURES OF
THOMAS CHRISTIANS OF MALABAR

Antony Vallavanthara

BOOK REVIEW :

1. RESURRECTION, LIFE AND RENEWAL
2. REPORT OF THE C. B. C. I. MEETING 1982

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JEEVADHARA

The People of God

TOWARDS AN INDIAN ECCLESIOLOGY

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Editorial

Organization and structures of the early Christian communities were not uniform, but diverse according to their different social, cultural, political and religious contexts. Uniformity in ecclesial and ministerial structures was the product of a gradual historical evolution. Today when we emphasize the diversity of local Churches and pluralism in theology, should we not think of an Indian theology of the Church? How can we understand the nature and mission of the Church in the Indian context today? How far the organization and structures of the Christian communities in India could be shaped by the Indian reality which has its own specific religious, philosophical, socio-cultural and political context? This number of *Jeevadhara* is a humble attempt to initiate a discussion on the theology of the Church in the Indian context.

India is a land of living religions of the "Spirit", and is known for its charismatic sages, Gurus and Yogis. In such a country does the Church manifest the vitality of the Spirit and a charismatic leadership? This is the challenging question V. F. Vineeth poses in his article, "Pneuma and Charisma in the Indian Church". A Church patterned after and dictated by the western Church, a Church lacking in creativity and originality, a Church unwilling to accept the equality of rites and a pluralism of worship patterns, does not manifest the presence and power of the Spirit. The Indian Church must be 'the Church of the New Dispensation', a Church guided by charismatic men and women under the power of the Spirit for a creative synthesis of the Christian faith and the Indian culture. For this synthesis what we need is freedom of the Spirit, not repression, openness to change, not preservation complex, and charismatic leaders, not guardians of the *status quo*. How long have we to wait for the coming of the Pentecost in the Indian Church!

J. B. Chethimattam in his article, "Ecclesiology in the Socio-Political Context of India", critically examines the image of the Church in India today. The Church in India today has

become just a communal group, an organization and an institution which caters for its own members. The Church has become one of the forces that try to maintain the *status quo* in society for its own gains with an unholy alliance with those in political power. It is far from the biblical idea and model of the Church which was a people's movement, a people inspired by the Gospel of Jesus, and a people sent to all the peoples to proclaim the Kingdom of God, which is the universal fellowship of humanity, a fellowship based on the supreme values of freedom, justice and love. The Church in India has to involve itself in the life, needs and problems of the Indian masses, and it does not need a leadership that remains up in the sky clad in a celestial aura, but leaders who could be with the people as one among them, who could inspire and guide the people in their struggle for authentic human life.

In a religiously pluralistic country like India with its extremely rich cultural and philosophical traditions, Christianity in its western outfit and absolute claims based on the economic and political superiority of the west, betrays simply the colonial mentality. What the Church in India needs today is an inculturated ecclesiology. This is the thrust of the article of T. M. Manickam. The author criticizes both the Latinism and the Orientalism that struggle to retain intact the vestiges of their foreign roots with the mentality of a kind of untouchability to the native cultural and spiritual values as well as traditions. Any absolutist claim of a particular culture or system of thought or world view as the only valid way of articulating the Christian faith denies justice to other cultures and thought patterns, and it is violation of the right of other Christian communities to express their faith in their own cultural context.

The article, "Idea of a Salvific Community in the Bhagavad Gita" by Sebastian Painadath explores the meaning of the Church in the Indian context in terms of the vision of Bhagavad Gita of a salvific community or prophetic community. Gita makes a protest against the caste discrimination and exploitation, stressed the basic equality of men, and presented a spirituality of involvement and struggle for a just society. According to Gita the individual attains his liberation by discovering his nature,

talents and aptitudes (*svabhava*), and by performing his duties that flow from his *svabhava* in selfless action for the welfare of the society (*lokasamgraha*). This commitment to society is intrinsically salvific, and the group of such committed persons plays a salvific role in society. They remove the causes of *adharma* from society, take part in the creation of new society, and thus become a *sacrament* of the salvific presence of Divine Love.

Antony Vallavanthara in his article makes an important point that when we think of the structures, patterns and mission of the Indian Church, we should not forget the traditions of the St. Thomas Christians of South India who had their own indigeneous ecclesial structures and traditions. This Church had a fully democratic structure. Problems were solved and important decisions were taken by the whole Christian community, by their representatives in the Church assemblies local as well as general. The General Assembly of the Church had power over the bishop but the bishop was the pastor and the community the sheep and they had a harmonious relationship as a community of love.

The editors and contributors of this number do not claim that they have here a blueprint for an Indian Ecclesiology. An Indian Ecclesiology cannot be simply created by some theologians. When the sons of the soil live, practise and articulate their Christian faith creatively and spontaneously in their own socio-cultural and political context under the power of the Spirit, the church in India will become truly Indian, and then only we shall be able to sketch the contours of an Indian Ecclesiology.

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Pneuma and Charisma in the Indian Church

Pneuma and *charisma* are intimately related to one another as two sides of the same coin. *Pneuma* as the Spirit, the Life-giver, is the fountainhead of all charisms whereas the charisms are the triumphant signals of the life of the Spirit in the Church. *Pneuma* is the foundation of the inner experience of man and *Charism* is the expression of the same experience enriched by the Spirit.

As a land given to the experience of the Spirit, India is very rich in developing a religion of the Spirit (*atman*) and expressing it in manifold ways through the men and women of *siddhi* (accomplishment or charism) she has produced in the course of her history. The Church in India also needs new articulation of her existence in India and for that sake new awakening of the Spirit and the expression of the newly awakened consciousness. The Spirit of God, the *pneuma*, the *atman*, which guided the primitive Church should lead her now in a special way and new men of charism should appear to enlighten and enliven the Church of India today. Hence this study on the *Pneuma* and *charisma* in the Indian Church.

1. *Pneuma* and *Charisma* in Religions

Religion as the religion of the Spirit

Religions are generally known as the religions of the Spirit. Even if certain religions do not make any explicit mention of the Spirit, they do speak about the need of a new awareness, a transformed consciousness in man. This consciousness is a spiritual consciousness, something different from man's average, every day awareness. Religions also think that man, in his ordinary everydayness, is prone to lead an inauthentic life and should come to authenticity through the awakening of the Spirit that is in him. This Spirit about which the religions speak is ultimately the Divine that is within him, the very immanent

Transcendence in man which alone makes religion possible. Man carries within himself the seed of Transcendence which is beyond his very self. That is why man never understands himself fully, ever struggles to realize himself more and more. This Transcendence that is immanent in man is what the *Upaniṣads* called the *atman*, the ultimate Self in all selves. This ultimate Self in its absolute Transcendence is called *Brahman*; but in its innermost immanence was known as *atman*. In fact this *atman* points to the divine centre that is in every man, the image of God in which man is created. The awakening of this divine centre in man is of vital importance in all religions. Because this centre is trans-empirical, spiritual and divine, the awakening of this centre is generally attributed to the Spirit: a word we use in analogy to the evaporating spirit which is without visible body-structure. The Spirit, therefore, stands for the Divine in man in contrast to the mundane in him, for the Eternal in him in contrast to the temporal and for what is immanently transcendent in him in contrast to what is empirically immanent in him. Though situated in the world, in time and space, and led by empirical awareness, man is continuously called by the Spirit to the Divine, to the Eternal and to Self-transcendence.

Seen from the Christian perspective of the Trinitarian dynamism God the Father, the ultimate source of all being, is the Absolute Transcendence. But the Father is made known to us through the Son. The Son revealing the Father to us, took our own form and made the Transcendent Absolute immanent in our human nature. It is this abiding presence of the transcendent God within us we call the uncreated grace, the abiding Spirit. Strictly speaking this Spirit is not the one to be prayed to, but is to be experienced, to be awakened; and once awakened with him we may pray to the Father, crying 'Abba, Father' (Gal. 4:6) and acknowledge the Son. Thus the Spirit becomes a constitutive element of our own interior centre. As regards the genuine experience of the Spirit Karl Rahner writes as follows:

In addressing ourselves to the question whether a man freely accepts this experience or rejects it, we must remember that the experience of the Spirit is not constituted by a particular divine operation 'from without', working upon the human spirit conceived

as an already finished entity. It comes about rather through God's self-communication to the human spirit ('uncreated grace') by which God becomes a constitutive element of human transcendence. Experience of the Spirit is, therefore, experience of the radical and permanent nature of human transcendence, which goes beyond itself towards God because it is constantly impelled by his self-communication.¹

Though Rahner's theory may sound new to many western readers, to the Indian mind it offers nothing that is startlingly new. In India the transcendent Brahman was always conceived also as immanent *atman*. About this *atman*, the inner Spirit the Upaniṣad says:

The intelligent, whose body is spirit, whose form is light, whose thoughts are true, whose nature is like ether, omni-present and invisible, from whom all works, all desires, all sweet odours and tastes proceed; he who embraces all this, who never speaks, and is never surprised, he is my self within the heart, smaller than a corn of rice, smaller than a corn of barley, smaller than a mustard seed, smaller than a canary seed or the kernel of a canary seed. He also is my self within the heart, greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than the heaven, greater than all these worlds. He from whom all works, all desires, all sweet odours and taste proceed, who embraces all this, who never speaks and who is never surprised, he, my self (*atman*) within the heart, is that Brahman.²

I do not mean the Christian understanding of the Spirit and the Indian understanding of the *atman* are identical. Yet India's understanding of *atman* can throw much light on our

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1. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 16 (London; Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979), p. 28
 2. *Chandogya Upaniṣad*, 3.14.2-4.

understanding of the Spirit of God that is within us. As the *atman* is to be awakened so the Spirit is to be experienced. In the last analysis the authentic experience of the Spirit is the awakening from within. The Spirit is often conceived as descending from above (the Pentecost, for example) because of the preponderance of a Transcendent God in the Judeo-Western understanding of God. But if God is conceived immanent, then the Spirit is not to descend from above; rather he is to be brought to one's own awareness from within: He is to be awakened. Hence India speaks about the awakening of the Spirit or even realizing the Spirit (*ātma-sākṣātkāra*).

Irrespective of the expression we use to designate the presence and operations of the Spirit, the Spirit invariably works from within and calls man to realize the potentialities that lie deep in the divine centre of man. The response to this call is a process. A few do respond in an admirable way. They come out as charismatics or men of an awakened consciousness.

Charism in the Non-Christian Religions of India

India believed the periodic renewal of humanity by the awakening of the Spirit. This is variously expressed in different religious traditions. Buddha appeared as the one who was awakened. The enlightenment was the religion he preached. According to Buddhism every man is considered to be a potential Buddha. Though Buddhism does not explicitly mention the Spirit and even deny any articulate expression of *atman*, yet Buddhism stands for the quest for Transcendence that is in every man. Buddha as the awakened one was certainly a charismatic who opened a new way of enlightenment for millions of people. Hinduism also believes in the continued descent of the Lord in order to renew the face of the earth. Thus in the *Bhagavadgita* we read:

Whenever Dharma fails and adharma prevails, for the restoration of Dharma, I come to this world again and again.³

3. *Bhagavadgita*, 4.8.

The descent of the divine is often understood in the form of *avatāra*, but is not necessarily restricted to the officially accounted avatars alone. God in his goodness can act in any man and awaken the *atman* that is in him and direct him for any specific purpose that He has in mind. They are meant to be the men of wisdom, the shining examples for all. Again the *Gīta* comments on them as follows.

But those whose unwisdom is made pure by the wisdom of their inner Spirit, their wisdom is unto them a sun and in its radiance they see the Supreme. Their thoughts on Him and one with Him, they abide in Him, and He is the end of their journey. And they reach the land of never returning, because their wisdom has made them pure of sin.⁴

Such saints and sages whose wisdom has made them pure of sin are plenty in Indian religious traditions. Many of them had great following. The Upanisadic gurus were such illustrated men of great wisdom, and discipleship naturally followed. As leaders who envisaged new vision of life and outlined new ways of life, these masters are to be reckoned as men of special charism, men in whom the Spirit has manifested himself in a special way. True to this Upanisadic tradition, India has produced down the centuries gurus and yogis, fakirs and bhaktas of remarkable calibre and unparalleled excellence. These extraordinary men, filled with the spirit of the divine, always worked for religious renewal of their society and successfully led a large number of people with them. Sankara, the great philosopher, Ramakrishna, the uneducated holy man of Calcutta, Vivekananda, the Hindu missionary to the West, Chaitanya, the distinguished devotees of Kṛṣṇa and many others can be mentioned as examples. In our own time India produces such men of charism who are greatly admired in India and abroad: Swami Sivananda of Rshikesh, Maharshi Mahes Yoga who founded the transcendental Meditation Movement and Swami Chinmaya the founder of Chinmaya Mission, to mention a few names of international fame. As a land of longstanding spiritual tradition India is still capable of bringing about new ways of spiritual realization. Not de-

4. *Bhagavadgita*, 5.16,17.

pending on an official sanction of an institutional authority, **charism** in non Christian religions may function with greater ease and perhaps with efficiency as well⁵. It may be objected that because of the lack of a censoring authority any doctrine or way of life may creep into the code of Hindu religious conduct. Though this is a valid objection, religious communities are generally capable of correcting themselves and truth will ultimately prove itself. It is also to be noted that the institutional censoring authority of a religion, despite its right and relevant role, when not delicately and carefully handled, can very well be a hindrance to the effective expression of a particular charism in that religion. But the Spirit who blesses the individual with his charismatic gifts can also inspire the man in the office so as to result an ultimate harmony and unity of all. That the Church may be implanted in India and take root in the Indian culture and may have an authentic Indian growth, we need many more men endowed with the creative gifts of the Spirit. Hence the next problem: Pneuma and Charisma in the Church.

2. Pneuma and Charisma in the Church

The Ecclesial Understanding of Charism

The word *Charisma* was introduced into the Church by St. Paul and he obviously meant by that the visible work of the Spirit. This work of the Spirit manifested in the faithful is considered a spiritual gift. Paul speaks elaborately about these gifts in his epistle to Corinthians, Chapters 12 to 14. In his epistle to the Romans he suggests that these gifts are to be seen as the signs of the baptized. "Just as each of our bodies has several parts and each part has a separate function, so all of us, in union with Christ, form one body, and as parts of it we belong to each other. Our gifts differ according to the grace given us" (Rom. 12:4-5a). But charism is not mere enthusiasm. It is defi-

5. For a study of the nature of Institution and Charism in Hinduism and Christianity, cf. Francis Vineeth (Vadake-thala), "Institution and Charism: A Hindu Christian Comparison" in *In Christ* (Vol. VI, 1968), pp. 28ff.

nitely a work of the Spirit, an awakening from within. And the Spirit works in diverse ways in different people. We have to keep ourselves open to the working of the Spirit not only in us, but also in others and not in one specific form alone, but in a variety of forms. The variety of gifts does not take away the unity of the Spirit. It is due to our selfishness and narrow way of thinking that we restrict the manifold expressions of the Spirit to our own taste and to our own school of thought. What is needed is, while holding our own and thus allowing the Spirit to operate in one way in us, hold ourselves open to other ways of his operation in other individuals. We have no right to set limits to the working of the Spirit. Those who wield power in the Church and have great responsibility to see to the working of the Spirit in the Church, have to take this idea of variety of spiritual gifts very seriously, because as human beings, we all are prone to ignore the work of the Spirit in others, especially when it is not to our taste. But it is to be remembered that personal taste or enthusiasm is not the norm to judge about the Spirit. Paul, enumerates different kinds of gifts of the Spirit and maintains that the Church as a body with different parts is actually in need of them. So he exhorts the Christians of Corinth to be tolerant to one another and to accept each other in love. Love is the crown of all gifts. "Even if I have the gift of prophecy, understanding all the mysteries there are, and knowing everything, and even if I have faith in all its fulness, to move mountains, but without love, then I am nothing at all." (1 Cor. 13:2) Love and acceptance of the other and his gifts is possible especially because it is the same Spirit who bestows his gifts on different persons. "There is variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them" (1 Cor. 12:4-6).

Later on, as the phenomenon of charism become rare, the scholastics were tempted to define charism as "peculiar privilege of the apostolic and primitive Church". There is no reason why

6. Karl Rahner, Ed., *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, Vol.1, article "Charisms" by Estevao Bettencourt, p. 283.

charism should be restricted to the primitive Church. Though it should not be denied that the primitive Church was in need of a special power of the Spirit for the primordial installation of the Church on earth, it is also to be maintained that substantially the same assistance of the Spirit is required for the actual implantation of the Church in any country or culture. Accordingly the living Spirit will manifest himself in a special way at any time. Charism is really the sign of the triumph of the Spirit's operation in man. We may call it the triumph of grace, a non-sacramental and "disposing" grace.

The Charismatic Nature of the Church

The Catholic Church as it is institutional is also by nature charismatic. It is the Church founded by Jesus Christ and guided by the Spirit. And the Spirit is given to everyone that all may contribute to the building up of the Church. The charismatic function of the Spirit is to unveil different dimensions of truth, to bring it to real splendour and translate it into actual life. Thus charism appears as a particular dimension of truth which needs new vibrations and articulations. Spirit as the bearer of truth, inspires the individuals to do so. This truth which is newly articulated can well be in the Church already. But not all truth that are in the treasury of the Church gets equal attention or articulation. As Rahner puts it:

It is we who may perhaps have to bring out some specific truth from the 'treasury' of the Church, dust it off, polish it, once more achieve a living understanding of it, realize it in our own concrete lives, and decide to do something more than merely to tolerate it or regard it as a matter of indifference.⁷

New dimensions of truth has appeared and reappeared in the history of the Church. The Church's dogmatic position with regard to certain articulations of truth is not at all against these new dimensions of truth. Truth is never articulated completely and exhaustively by any agent on earth. This is pre-

7. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 11 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1976), p. 41.

cisely why the Spirit has still to work, and actually awakens human consciousness with new experience of truth. Opposition to the newly unveiling dimension of truth is also to be expected in the Church especially because to preserve is easier and more comfortable than to renew and to be creative. But such oppositions are to be faced courageously and if the Spirit is genuine he will certainly work out what he has in store for us. This is what we see in the history of many saints and founders of many religious congregations who had some new visions and aspirations with regard to the life of the Church on earth. The opposition comes also, because of the Church's genuine concern to preserve the truths that have been committed to her by the Lord. But this concern to preserve the Lord's teachings should be reconciled and balanced with the quest for growth and dynamism of the Spirit in the Church.

If we are only concerned about preaching the Saviour Christ, we may forget the dimension of the Spirit. The Spirit of Christ which he promised and actually gave, has wider dimensions than the historical reality of Christ, as traditionally understood by Christians.

What we really need is a charismatic Church where the Spirit works. While helping us to accept and acknowledge the Church of Christ, this Spirit will also help us to transcend its limitations in virtue of our openness to the same Spirit whom we may find operating elsewhere and everywhere. In a Church of the Spirit real men of charism will appear. This Church will never be a slave of its own past structures; rather such a Church will keep its life-current ever dynamic, will be a real *Jeevadhara*, will be ever creative and progressive, and will be able to face the challenges of life courageously without any fear of oppression from outside or preservation complex from inside. It is such a Church we need in India.

3. The need of a Pneumatic and Charismatic Church in India

When, almost a century ago, Keshub Chander Sen said that we need a Church of the New Dispensation, he was not

8. Raimundo Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (New York: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 58.

much attended to by Christians. But Sen may deserve a hearing from the most faithful followers of Christ himself. By the Church of the New Dispensation Sen meant a Church in which the Spirit works out a creative synthesis of the basic Christian faith and Indian culture. This kind of a pneumatic Church is the need of every country, especially when it is being implanted in a new culture. The Lord himself said to his beloved disciples before his final farewell: "And now I am sending down to you what the Father has promised. Stay in the city then, until you are clothed with the power from the high" (Luke, 24:49). Already Jesus foresaw the danger of preaching a religion without the Spirit which alone will give man the power to transcend the limitations of religion, even of the very religion that is being preached. So Jesus carefully warned them to be in Jerusalem praying for the coming of the Spirit, till the Spirit actually descend on them. Of course the New Testament was to be preached as the Testament of the New Commandment of Love enacted and sealed by the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus. It was undoubtedly a Christ centred message, a kerygma of Christ, that was to be preached. Yet it was to be inaugurated only with the coming of the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but proceeds from both. Operating within us the Spirit does not leave our religion in the utter unfathomability of the Father nor in the articulate concreteness of the Son alone; rather he helps us to discover his presence and operation in all that is true, good and beautiful. Once again the Spirit unites and recognizes the unlimitedness of the Divine and the limitedness of all its human expressions made available to us through religions. The Father as a mystery of unbound existence is everywhere. The Son as the ground or foundation of any form of existence is also in everything. It is the Spirit who unifies and recognizes, these two in all creatures, elevates them and declares them holy. The Spirit as an abiding presence in all (*isovasyam idam sarvam, Iṣa.1.1*) works out this unity in all, not only within the Church, but also in all religions.

Jesus also said to his disciples: "It is for your own good that I am going, because unless I go, the Advocate will not come to you" (Jn.16:7). Jesus saw that the disciples were very

much attached to his humanity. Ofcourse the humanity was the medium through which the Word expressed itself. They had to accept the humanity. But they had also to transcend the humanity in virtue of the Logos. The Spirit alone can give man the power to accept and transcend the visibility of the Invisible. The Spirit alone knows what God really is: invisible and ineffable, and what God has become by his operation: visible and articulate in the form of human flesh. Acceptance and transcendence of the finite articulation of the Infinite is the essence of our Christian faith and it is the work of the Spirit.

The church is often tempted to make the same error from which Jesus carefully saved his disciples. The Church sees herself as the visibility of the kingdom of God which Christ preached. Though this is radically right, this hasty identification can take away all dynamism of the Spirit from within the Church. Then it is likely that the institutional structure of the Church with its power and offices take the place of the visible humanity of Christ and if we consider the proclamation of this Church as our primary duty, then once again we are far away from the kingdom of God Jesus envisaged which includes all men of good will guided by the Spirit. The Spirit alone will make us capable of accepting and transcending the Church.

We need a Charismatic Church with a Creative Genius

Today the world, especially the Western world, is very much looking to the East for spiritual renewal. Thousands and thousands are flowing from the West to the East seeking yoga, meditation and other spiritual ways of self-realization. Usually they all end up in Hindu ashrams as the Christian churches hardly have anything genuinely Indian to offer them. The Churches in India have indulged in aping a dying West and are perhaps still fighting with regard to the details of the same. What the world and thus the universal church as well, needs is something different: the Christian awakening of a forgotten dimension of her own spirituality. Perhaps Indian Church, if allowed to grow with natural spontaneity in the spiritual climate in which she is placed, may be able to give this to the universal Church. But for this the Spirit should work in our Church and we have to allow the Spirit to work.

The experience of the Spirit must be liberating. It is the Spirit of the freedom of the children of God that we have received. With the restoration of the Spirit of Christ in us we are liberated from the slavery of the Law. This was the basic contention of St. Paul. To keep any church under such legal restrictions so as to deny the spontaneity and naturality of her life and expressions is certainly against the basic freedom which the Spirit has given to every one of us. Seen from this perspective, the repression of the Oriental Church in this country is absolutely understandable. To keep a church under the tyranny of Law in such a way as not to allow its natural growth and authentic expression is flagrantly against all standards of basic freedom which all of us are entitled to enjoy. Precisely on account of this many orientals become ultra-defensive and a kind of preservation complex haunt all their thinking and action. This may not be the ideal state of things. But those who blame this stand should also think that it is not these Orientals who created this unjust situation in our Indian Church. What we really need in our church that it may grow and yield desirable fruits, is perhaps not so much a theology of self-defence and self-preservation as that of mutual acceptance and appreciation. That this may take place the Spirit in us must be awakened and help us to lay the foundation for a Church where all are equal, equally treated and respected. At present this is not the case at least with regard to the Orientals. Ecclesiastically, they are deprived of their basic human right of existence and expression in their own country. Such bans which are openly against the spirit of equality and human dignity, must be lifted that all may come with equal dignity and without any preservation complex for a meaningful dialogue and for more constructive programmes. Such a redeemed situation may eventually open the way for a greater synthesis of these churches as is aspired by many bishops and theologians of this country. Such a possibility need not be theologically ruled out. What we have to do is to hold ourselves open to the working of the Spirit, removing the barriers we ourselves have created. The Indian Church is a Church with great potentiality. Once united and decided to be creative, her power can be enormous. Then she may give quite a lot to the world and to the universal Church in the art of praying, meditating and even in liturgical

worship. If not, she will keep on living the past rather with a spirit of preservation complex and mutual self-defence and will naturally be barred from all creative programmes of the Spirit. It is here we need the assistance of the Spirit in a special way to break us and make us one, to lead us along the path of life, progress and creativity.

The recourse to law and preservation is not necessarily a sign of the Spirit. It can very well be a sign of refusal to change. It can also be a sign of certain vested interest in preserving the *status quo*. Generally those who lack the power of the Spirit hang on to tradition in a Slavish manner. The Spirit will rather foster a creative acceptance of one's own tradition, especially when it encounters other traditions. But when one's inner depth is empty, then the only norm is from outside. This was the case of Judaism which Jesus encountered. Hence the good News came as the news of the liberation from the slavery of the Law. The fanatic addiction to certain liturgical rubrics of a bygone century at the expense of love and concord in the Church is certainly not a sign of the living Spirit in the Church. It can very well point to the lack of liberating Spirit of God in the Church. The true Spirit combines identity and growth, tradition and modernity, past and present. It does not consist in celebrating the past in the present as performing some rituals evolved in the early centuries without any change or adaptation to the present state of consciousness of the people for whom it is celebrated. Rather it consists in creatively answering the challenges of our time, even in the pattern of worship. This creative work of the Spirit is not the produce of any particular school, though different schools may have their roles to play. It comes from the Spirit itself which alone has the power to transcend all particularities, yet allow the particular to blossom in its own genius and tradition. Thus the capacity of self-acceptance and transcendence will only make a particular Church grow properly. Self-acceptance without transcendence can become fanaticism and uncompromising addiction to outdated tradition. Transcendence without self-acceptance can also be equally unauthentic, as it creates a community without rootedness in its own past. Only the Spirit can bring about the proper synthesis of these two, and the Spirit is at work even now, as it was in the be-

ginning. Our duty is not to block the Spirit nor to project our own self as the Spirit. When the Spirit works it out then real men of charism appear in the Church. In and through them the Spirit works and only in so far as the Spirit works in them, they are real men of charism. We need such men of charism in our Church: bishops, priests, religious or lay, that we may settle the problem of rites amicably for the whole of India, and that we may tide over the liturgical impasse in the Syro-Malabar wing of the Oriental Churches.

We need more and more spiritual men of real charism of the Spirit, that we may change the face of the Church in India, make it more authentically Indian. By imposing an English way of prayer-life, especially by breviary and hymns, the Church in India has alienated many of her faithful from the natural rhythm and spontaneity of their prayer-life. As long as we use these imported prayers, we will be less creative. Since we are not the masters of these prayers, we can only preserve them, and not creatively alter them. In this respect the new malayalam breviary and the service of the dead, produced by the Oriental Church in Kerala, in spite of all the possible imperfections they may have, certainly deserve praise and encouragement. This breviary has helped to restore the rhythm of prayer-life of innumerable religious back to the rhythm of their own country and culture. The result is also visible: the gifted ones compose new music for the texts that are in the breviary in their own mother tongue. This creativity is possible only if the prayer is set in their own rhythm of life. Though the Orientals in Kerala have done comparatively well in this matter, yet they have still to go a long way, that our Church be totally liberated.

The work of the Spirit is obviously unity of heart. St. Paul clearly speaks of this in his epistle which we have already seen. The fight, disagreement and division in this little Church over such trifle matters are certainly not the signs of the work of the Spirit in the Church. The fight between bishops is an open matter of discussion today, whenever priests, religious or lay people meet in any conference. We need deliverance from this situation. And for this the Spirit should work. Let a bishop or more bishops with the charism of leadership emerge. Unity does not mean absolute oneness in opinion. The Spirit may

unveil different aspects of reality even in the same Church. Accordingly different patterns may be slowly arising even in matters of worship. Unity or a real charismatic leadership demands a basic openness to varieties of expressions and a gradual acceptance of pluriformity. New challenges are to be met newly. People who live in an exclusive community of the Orientals without much interaction with the people of other traditions should not think that the way they think and do must be the norm for all. Others have different situations, problems to solve, challenges to face. In the same way people who live constantly with other ecclesial communities and have continuous interaction with other cultural patterns, should not also think that what they think justified for them should be the norm for those who live as an exclusive community of the Orientals. The one Spirit can allow pluriformity of worship, always remaining in the same genius and under the same jurisdiction. Precisely this is the freedom the Oriental Churches enjoyed. The authoritarian legalism of imposing the same ritual pattern everywhere is neither pneumatic, nor charismatic, nor oriental. Centralization was at its zenith in the Roman Church. Though the Roman Church is decentralizing, certain Oriental groups seem to have imbibed the Roman legalism to such an extent that the mental framework of these people is now completely determined by such an enslaving spirit of legalism. This situation naturally deprives the Oriental Church of its genuine charism of pluriformity and of its power to respond to the challenges of times creatively. Let us hope that a new bishop or more bishops of charisms of the Spirit will emerge in this Church, who will be open to the different aspects of truth needing expressions, who will successfully unite his fellow-bishops in accepting each other and lead the clergy and laity to face the new challenges with creative response.

Christians are told by the Spirit to look to faith for those rewards that righteousness hopes for, for in Christ Jesus whether you are circumcised or not makes no difference. What matters is faith that makes its power felt through love (Gal. 5:5-6).

Similarly the Oriental Church (the Syro-Malabar) in India is to be told by the Spirit to look to faith for those rewards

that righteousness hopes for; for in Christ Jesus whether you celebrate according to 1962 missal or 1968 missal or any other trifle matters like that makes no difference. What matters is faith that makes its power felt in love, in mutual acceptance and openness to understand each other. The problem here is not that of scholarship or non-scholarship in matters of liturgy, but of an attitude towards the whole reality of liturgy and the reality of God unveiling itself continuously.

St. Paul also speaks about the signs of the Spirit and the signs of the flesh in the same Epistle. Among the signs of the flesh he includes "jealousy, bad temper, quarrels, disagreement, factions and envy" (Gal. 5:20). When it comes to matters of liturgy people often wonder what Spirit guides our leaders, theologians and thinkers. As the signs of the Spirit Paul mentions in the same epistle the following: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, truthfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22). A real charismatic led by the Spirit will have these characteristic notes. If one thinks what he thinks only is right and hence to be uncompromisingly maintained, we shall never come to a unity of heart. The Spirit should help us to accept each other's view and to proceed constructively for a happy synthesis.

Pluriformity in lifestyle and even in worship does not mean chaotic individualism in the Church. As a worshipping community the Church needs some basic common pattern rooted in her own tradition. Apart from the basic minimum, this common pattern need not be the same every where. In other words different texts and forms of liturgies could be evolved and later officially approved. True to the Oriental tradition different anaphoras can also be introduced. That this may be materialized some steps in its favour must be taken and this is the task of leadership with the charism of Spirit. If the Spirit works order and originality can very well go together. Individuality and pluriformity can thrive. Present will meet and transform the past. For this we need a Church led by *Pneuma* and rich in *Charisma*.

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Ecclesiology in the Socio-Political Context of India

Church and politics are a controversial combination, since church and religion are identified with the spiritual side of human life and politics deals with the temporal concerns. So when representatives of religion, priests, religious and especially bishops deal with political matters they are accused of stepping outside their own specific sphere. When they use their prestige and authority derived from their spiritual leadership to influence the political choices of people there is a natural outcry that it is an undue interference. Though their right as individual citizens to speak out on political issues may be grudgingly granted, their identification with the church as an institution is too close to permit them absolute freedom in political activities. Recognizing this, ecclesiastical authorities often prohibit the clergy and the religious from engaging in political activities like standing for election to public offices and actively participating in party politics. On the other hand, church as a permanent visible organization of people for their common good is itself a political entity and it cannot achieve its goals without publicly organizing people and leading them to set objectives. Hence the question is not whether the church should engage in political activity or not, but rather what type of political activity is proper to it. The existence, survival and success of the church in India depends very much on a full realization of its political reality in bringing people together to respond to God's call.

But in a theological examination of the political reality of the church one has to distinguish clearly a political conception of the church, a theology of politics and a political theology of the church. Like any other visible institution of human society church too may be described and interpreted in terms of the combination and interaction of political factors like the conflict of personalities, divergences of motivations, change of socio-economic factors and the balance of power. Such explanations may not take into account the supernatural mission of

the church and the divine authority it bears, and hence may have nothing theological about it. Similarly a theologian as a simple spectator can examine what goes on in a political society and evaluate now a people's struggle for freedom and material well being, stability in organization and success in their undertakings affect their spiritual welfare and eternal salvation; in this theological evaluation of a political situation the theologian may not be actually involved in the scene. In contrast to these two approaches a political ecclesiology sees the people of God as fully involved in its dynamic political self-organization as an integral part of its mission to bring about the kingdom of God on earth. The unity and sanctity of the church Christ founded is not merely in praying together, celebrating the Eucharist and in suffering together in obedience to God's will, but also in fighting together for the establishment of justice, freedom and universal well being for all the children of God. An ecclesiology that leaves out the social, economic, cultural or political aspects of human life is truncated.

The Political Reality of the Church

Most religions of man primarily aim at helping their individual followers to reach their personal self-fulfilment and salvation through an intimate experience of the divine reality. They emphasize the divine as the matter of man's ultimate concern. So religion is described as the sum total of man's relationship with God, faith in the divine existence and divine precepts, moral obligations flowing from such faith and the worship of the Deity. World and the community of men form only a context in which one's personal relation to God is expressed and realized. They can also form a scandal or obstacle in the way of attaining one's spiritual goal. Religious experience is the encounter with the awesome and yet fascinating mystery that presents a total challenge to one's individual existence. The Judeo-Christian tradition presents a sharp and clear contrast to this general pattern of world religions. Supposing and taking for granted man's encounter with the divine, Judaism presents the primary task of religion as a historical and communitarian mission. Man meets God not as a blind force nor as a formless ground of being, but as a person. He meets Him not in a field

of timeless consciousness, but in history, at a particular point in time, and he faces Him not as an isolated individual, but as present in the midst of the human community in the world. God the one creator who created all things makes man partner of a contract with Him. Man shares in a divine project to liberate the world and all beings and especially man himself from their isolation from God and to establish God's rule in the universe and to bring all to a sort of eschatological fellowship with their maker. This is basically and essentially a political project, to organize all men as one family and community having a common history and a common destiny.

Christianity further clarified this political task of religion: Christ proclaimed his message of salvation as a new covenant with God, the inauguration of the new kingdom. It is a new fellowship animated by the Spirit of God uniting people in prayer, praise and sharing of material goods. The ideal of this kingdom as stated in the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount is identification with the poor, suffering and down-trodden sections of the community seeking liberation, justice and peace for all. Its basic law is love and concern for each other, uniting all men under the leadership of Christ. Christ asked his disciples to pray that God's will and rule may be established on earth as they are in heaven. But he was also aware of the dangers of mixing the project of establishing God's law in all aspects of human life with the pursuit of the temporal prosperity of people. In such a fusion material concerns are bound to take the upper hand, and confuse and obscure the spiritual concerns and even corrupt the spiritual leadership as well. Christ declared before Pilate that his kingdom is not of this world. He indicated a clear distinction between church and state when he asked the Jews who questioned him about paying tribute to Caesar to give to Caesar what was Caesar's and God's to God. He warned his disciples that since they were not of this world, the world would hate and persecute them.

The different New Testament books indicate the varying attitudes of the early church towards the political institutions of the times, especially the Roman government. Over against the persecutions suffered by the Christian community at the

hands of the Jews, St. Paul and his fellow Christians should have found the benevolent rule of the Romans a haven of security. So Paul advises the Christians to recognize the authority of the temporal power and to obey its laws. A few decades later, especially after the destruction of Jerusalem the Gospels speak of a clear separation between church and state. But in the context of the Johannine writings the political power of Rome appears essentially evil, bringing only persecution and destruction to God's people. But at any rate as a visible institution working for the organization of men in view of their ultimate goal the church could never ignore the state, which has a certain parallel scope in achieving the temporal well-being of the same people she cares for. Sometimes in the history distinction of roles between church and state were obscured and it led to undesirable conflicts.

The Political Evolution of the Church

How much of the church's political evolution in history was a providential help for the achievement of her mission and how much of it an undesirable freak of history can be debated. At least in the early centuries the church did not give the impression of a great political organization. It was essentially the local community gathered around the Eucharistic altar under the leadership of the bishop. This community had all the necessary and sufficient means to call together and organize effectively the people of God. The universality of the church was maintained by the constant communication between and communion of the bishops of a particular region or country and also with the bishops and communities of the entire world. In this it did not deviate much from the pattern and tradition of Judaism. Even the title of "Apostles" given to the disciples of Christ was derived from the Judaic tradition of sending emissaries from Jerusalem to the Jews scattered in the rest of the world. Even at that early stage the concern of the church was not restricted to the spiritual sphere. It cared for the whole human person, ministering to the temporal needs of people as well through the sharing of material goods. Essentially it was the "ecclesia", the people called together by God.

But the conversion of Constantine to Christianity and the Edict of Milan brought about a radical change in the political status of the church. It came to be recognized as an universal institution. Its prestige rose so much that those who did not embrace christianity were labelled "pagans", uncultured country people: When the emperor became the patron of the church, the assembly of bishops assumed the appearance and power of the Roman senate and it could call upon the power of the state to give teeth to its decisions and execute its decrees of expulsion, excommunication and the like.

This political growth of the church assuming the dimensions of the Roman empire into Christendom was not an unmixed blessing. Indeed, the rapid expansion of the church in the Western world owed more to the sword of emperors like Constantine and Theodosius than to the reputed fertility of the blood of martyrs. When the emperors provided protection and prestige to the church, they also naturally used the church for their own political ends. The unity of the church was a sort of guarantee for the unity of the empire. Hence when heresies and schisms arose in the church it was the emperor who often took the initiative to resolve them by convoking the ecumenical councils and carrying out its decisions exiling the condemned into the farthest corners of the empire. Similarly in the long period of alliance between church and state in medieval Europe when the ecclesiastical authority condemned witches and heretics, the state burned them at the stakes or expelled them. In fact the great heresies did not start with differences in faith but often with political rivalries between Constantinople and Alexandria, between Rome and the East, and theology was called in subsequently to bolster up political partisanships. History gives indubitable evidence for the evils of caesaropapism and papal caesarism. Those churchmen who withstood the wishes of the political authority were easily removed from office or subjected to all kinds of harassment. Popes and other higher ecclesiastics also did not fail to attempt, when they could, to impose their political will on temporal rulers through excommunications and interdicts.

Even today in some of the so-called Catholic countries attempts are made to manipulate the church to serve the power

craze of dictators. In the name of national security and under the pretext of opposing Marxism and atheism dictators offer social status and material benefits to church men in order to secure their connivance and support in suppressing even the basic rights of the mass of citizens, to maintain the wealth and power of the rich.¹ The Latin American bishops in their Puebla conference reacted to such state tactics by condemning the "statist view of human being, which is grounded in the theory of national security. It enrolls the individual in unlimited service to the alleged total war against social, political and economic strife—and thereby against the threat of communism ... In its name the insecurity of the individual becomes institutionalized".²

Church has to be always on its guard against the possibility of becoming a mere tool in the hands of the state. For this it has to understand clearly its political reality and role not simply in the abstract in textbook definitions but in the concrete situation in which it exists. In order to discover the place and task of the church in the Indian context we have to analyse its present structure, discern its main defects and weaknesses and also find out the avenues open to it in the socio-economic, cultural and political fields for achieving its supernatural goal. In the apologetic zeal to defend its own image against the outsiders church tends to take its all round holiness for granted, and forgets that any institution found in human conditions needs continuous renewal. Self-criticism is difficult. But only by an ongoing self-examination and self-criticism can it escape the death embrace of a cosy self-complaisance and maintain healthy sense of its mission.

Political Analysis of Existing Church Structures

When we talk about the church in India we are not concerned primarily with the juridical ecclesiastical set up which is more or less uniform for the whole world and which in its own sphere needs some radical rethinking in the modern world. Here the question is more about the role and impact of those struct-

1. See *Pacem in Terris* ≠ 36

2. *Puebla and Beyond* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981) ≠ 314 p. 167.

ures and of persons occupying official positions in it and their attitudes and approaches in a developing country like India. There is no doubt that all these questions are politically charged. There are different socio-political models available for studying the place and role of the church in our country, and the relationships and interactions that constitute the actual organization of the church.

An analysis in terms of class conflicts according to the Marxist vision of society is a readily available tool for a political interpretation of society. The opposition between rich and poor, the wealthier class that thrive by the labour of the working class kept in subjection by sheer economic need explains the tensions and conflicts in society. The leaders of the church, the bishops and the clergy generally belong to the middle of upper middle class and naturally side with the rich and the powerful. For their own security and for the peace and welfare of the church as a whole they want to maintain the *status quo*, howsoever unjust it be. So through religious indoctrination and different methods of persuasion they influence the oppressed and the exploited class to be reconciled to their lot in the hope of a future happiness in heaven. If a revolution is to happen or the present ruling class is to be replaced by another, church will immediately shift its allegiance to the new authority, give it religious justification, and will use its good offices to pacify the newly oppressed. Hence the church, and all religions for that matter, tend to help and support the domination of the powerful over against the working class. It is naturally unthinkable that the church authorities who depend on the benevolence of the powers that be to obtain approbation and grant-in-aid for their schools, cement permits for buildings, police protection from goondas and Naxalites and a thousand other favours will ever raise their voice against the dominating class in support of the weak and the oppressed sections of society. Thus the actual political role of the church in India is to maintain the *status quo*, support the authority of those who are at the actual moment in power and help them keep the working class continuously under control.

But this Marxist model of class war cannot explain many of the group conflicts and coalitions which appear on the

Indian scene. There are various other forces and trends at work in society that restrict and determine the political role of the church: Communal forces that pitch one community against another, Hindus against Muslims, Christians against Muslims, Nairs against Ezhavas and the like. There are also regional interests, the south against the north, Bengalese against the Assamese, Kannadigas against Tamilians and the like. These communal and regional forces and other trends often cut across classes in important ways. Add to these also the special characteristics of a developing nation in which independence is an event of the relatively recent past, and democracy still an experiment with tenuous roots in a traditionally authoritarian society which concentrated authority, power and prestige in the higher echelons of the caste system. Hence only a multi-dimensional macro-analytical model can interpret the socio-political structure of Indian society and especially the society of the church.

In this complex socio-political context the self-image of the church in India suffers from a number of defects and drawbacks. During the past several centuries Christian piety as a whole has been growing increasingly individualistic. The main function of the church is seen as ministering to the individual needs of the faithful. Conversion is very much an individual affair and there is very little feeling of the church as a people sent to peoples. Against the background of this growing individualism, on the socio-political plane the church appears as a purely communal organization concerned with safeguarding and promoting the economic, social and political interests of the local christian community over against other communities with no sense of the spiritual mission of the church as a community to all people. Even among christians tensions and conflicts based on caste, rite, language and region abound. When Christians were a down trodden people with all the wealth, political offices and privileges monopolized by high caste Hindus, the church had a high priority in her spiritual mission to come to the defence of the basic rights of people and to fill in temporarily the vacuum of leadership. But that even, long after the situation has radically changed, the church authorities should be busy defending the special privileges and rights of Christians

over against other groups often less privileged than they are, shows a communalistic perversion of the Indian church. Even the constant conflicts in the name of the purity of Rites evince a lack of theological substance behind them. People in rural areas are naturally attached more strongly to their past traditions in liturgy, cult and prayer than those in urban areas, where people actually feel the need for change and accommodation with other rites, customs and patterns of behaviour. Such natural human tensions are often bolstered up with specious theological reasons, one side pleading for fidelity to the purity of an ancient rite and the other calling for liturgical renewal and active participation of the people in public worship.

Another socio-political source of tension in the Indian church is the natural human craving for power. Ecclesiastical organization into regions, dioceses and parishes is not seen in the light of an ecclesiology from below as the gathering of the people under the leadership of the bishop around the Eucharistic table and inter-communion of such local communities extending further and wider into the universal church. It is seen, interpreted and preached in the perspective of an ecclesiology from above, a jurisdiction and government exercised by the Pope over the bishops and by the bishop over the parishes and by the clergy over the laity. Here authority is power and one who has that power guards his territory jealously. This power structure of the dioceses is at the root of the ever continuing tension between the Latin dioceses of the north and the Syrian dioceses of the South. The ideal of uniform effective control by the bishop is given priority over the salvific mission of the church to all men. Some years ago when a Latin bishop was questioned about the possibility of giving up some unevangelized sections of his diocesan territory to the abundantly available Syro-Malabar clergy, he vehemently responded: "I would rather leave them pagans than make them Orientals." Nor are the Syrian prelates who ask for an extension of their jurisdiction into northern areas any less motivated by the desire for power than their Latin counter-parts.

Problems of the Indian Church

The principal problems of the Indian church are to a great extent political. Lack of a sense of the mission of the church as God's people to all peoples in the communitarian sense is at the root of most of the problems.

I. Isolation into Parochial Issues

Ever since the arrival of the colonial powers in the sixteenth century the Indian identity of the church was weakened and it was reduced to the status of a missionary church under the tutelage of the Western church. In the national struggle for independence from the Western powers it remained mostly on the sidelines, and even after national independence, we cannot honestly say, that it has fully involved itself in the major human problems facing the nation as a whole. It has to all appearance opted to live with issues in secret compromise, than face squarely the serious problems like the widespread poverty of the masses by the side of the relative affluence of a minority, the continued colonialism of the Western nations in the subtler forms of economic and cultural domination, the ageold conflict among the different communal and regional interests, widespread corruption at all levels of public life and the neglect or even exploitation of the weaker sections of society by those in positions of power.

The Christian community with its preeminence in the field of education has a more than proportionate share of scholars, professionals and specialists in all fields and if the church authorities wished they could have easily organized them into a sort of "think-tank" for finding solutions to the problems of the nation. But this has not happened because there is no single church authority in the nation competent to do it. The church in India never acted with a unity of purpose and unity of leadership for the integral realization of God's kingdom in the people of India. The bishops in charge of the hundred dioceses into which the country is divided are concerned only with their own restricted territories and that too narrowed down to the microscopic Catholic population of each diocese and its petty local problems. Apart from the Catholic Bishop's Conference of India which is little more than a discussion forum

for bishops with no effective power, the only unifying factor in the Indian church is the Papal Representative, who as an ambassador has only to see that the bishops obey and depend on Rome in everything exercising as little initiative as possible.

The church traditionally worked with a restrictive ecclesiology that considers the church as a particular institution marked by its distinguishing notes separating it from other churches and religions and groups. It caters only to its members while attempting to make others too enter its membership. It is catholic with a capital C, an institution serving only the Catholics. There is little sense of the mission of the church to all nations and communities. The Indian church has yet to realize the full implications of the term "People of God" popularised by Vatican II. The People of God in a place or country is not simply the Catholics, but the people God loves, the people who are in varying degrees related to Christ, and that means all the people. Hence a church that restricts its care and concern to its official, visible membership is failing in its mission. A church whose main purpose is or appears to be to secure the political rights of its people, obtain jobs and financial advantages for them in opposition to and often at the neglect and expense of other communities is guilty of communalism.

2. Institutionalism

In the past the church was a pioneer in providing educational and health services to the people, founding schools, colleges and hospitals. But ever since the welfare state took on itself the responsibility for these services the church is in a rather crowded field competing with other agencies in rendering the same services to the same people. The apostolic value of these institutions which constitute a severe strain on the limited financial and personnel resources of the church is rather dubious. Often they cater only to the rich and their main purpose would seem to be to maintain a status of prestige and influence in society for obtaining favours in return from the powerful. No one can say that in the present circumstances they present the ideal type of witnessing expected from the humble ministers of the word of God. Our institutions are no longer generally looked upon as symbols of service and dedication to the people; they only

rouse surprise in common people and jealousy in competing agencies. Since the age of pioneering is over, such institutions ought to be undertaken by the church only to the extent they can provide models of efficient and selfless service to the people at large, especially to the poor. Unfortunately, the great majority of our present institutions do not live up to this standard.

3. Foreign Money

By far the most corrupting factor in the life of the church in India is foreign money. No one should forget the fact that the Indian church flourished centuries without any financial help from the outside world. It cannot, however, be denied that some financial help from abroad can be helpful today for the health and growth of the church. But for several reasons the flow of money from foreign countries has proved to be a real curse on the church. (i) First of all the unrestrained craving for foreign help is a direct consequence of institutionalism: Building and maintaining big institutions are beyond the limited means of our people and so require foreign help. With greater availability of foreign funds institutions too do increase and as institutions increase the need for foreign help also increases in a sort of never ending spiral. (ii) But the difficulty with foreign money is that nobody gives it spontaneously; you have to beg for it. This has transformed our bishops from leaders and pastors into principally fund-raisers. Besides maintaining a continuous correspondence with funding agencies some of them also spend several months every year abroad for collecting funds. (iii) Since it is much easier to beg money from these in foreign countries whom we do not know than to collect it from our own countrymen, the available native resources are easily neglected. Thus from our healthy tradition of building our churches and schools with our own wealth and self-sacrifice we have in recent times lost the joy and pride of supporting ourselves and got into the demeaning habit of looking for handouts from people abroad, who are often in fact relatively poorer in their own society than we are. (iv) Lack of proper accountability is another source of evil. Our bishops are not generally suspected of diverting church money for their private

benefit or the benefit of their relatives. Nobody questions their good faith, either. But Cardinals and archbishops by their high visibility pose abroad as representatives of our nation and corner and monopolize all the available funds. But the spending of this money is completely at the personal discretion of the bishop and others have no say nor role in the disposition of it. But a system in which a gullible archbishop could give away about twelve lakhs of rupees for a fake research, has, to say the least, something radically wrong about it. Hence it is to their own benefit that our church leaders make public their accounts stating clearly the source of their income and also the detailed disbursement of all the monies received. Only a detailed budgeting according to actual needs and an accurate accounting of all funds can put a stop to the unrestricted fund raising that goes on today. One has to question seriously whether more palatial buildings and more ornate churches are the real need of the church in India today for the fulfilment of her mission.

4. Absolutism

The institutionalism of the church today stems from deeper theological misconception, the conservative tendency to absolutize the existing structure, to identify what the church came to be by historical accident with what Christ wanted it to be. The mission of the church has been theologically summarised in the biblical notions of teaching, sanctifying and governing. But in course of time these notions have become rigid, stereotyped and reified. Vatican Council II has directed our attention back to their true biblical meaning. Sanctification has been often reduced to the ritual administration of the sacraments, a strictly sacerdotal monopoly, with the laity playing a purely passive role. Today there is a demand for an active participation of the laity in the work of sanctification, so that it becomes a fuller expression of the visible power of the whole church in its social character. Similarly the New Testament mission of proclaiming the good news was interpreted as giving out dogmatic definitions and rulings. Those who exaggerate the doctrinal authority of the Pope as if he were a sort of oracle or a huge supernatural computer to provide ready answer to every difficult problem actually do disservice to that authority. The fact that Vatican II

did not use the traditional form of dogmatic decrees suggests that today we have to return to something more like the apostolic proclamation. In the triumphalist attitude of the recent past the church was more preoccupied with its own structures, institutions, rights and privileges than with Christ himself, more concerned with the minutiae of dogmatic formulations than with truth. It often seemed to claim an authority over minds and wills which neither the apostles nor Christ himself ever asked for.³ Vatican II has initiated a trend to move away from such triumphalism.

Similarly Christ's commission to lead has in course of time been interpreted into an absolutist form of government from which the laity is completely excluded. Church government is conservative and authoritarian. It fails to recognize the historical contingency of the concrete institutional church. The imposition of a rule from above requires an elaborate bureaucratic set up in which persons do not count. A bureaucracy simply manages, does not lead and never inspires. Invested with the sanctity of the ecclesiastical office church government can elicit docility, but cannot encourage originality and creativity. Ecclesiastical pomp adds the symbols of royalty to the high offices in the church. But this absolutist set up looks quite out of place in the democratic spirit of the modern age, and conflicts radically with the spirit of collegiality established by Christ in the community of his disciples. The New Testament provides no support for an absolute church government which is not consonant with the dignity and freedom of human persons that form the people of God. An authoritarian rule cannot be justified as exercise of paternal authority, since this by definition is exercised upon the immature. The methods by which church authority executes its policies and decisions are not purely ecclesiastical but often purely secular. The most common example of this is employing church funds as persuasions and threats which evidently are secular and political means of accomplishing one's will.

3. "The Institutional Church" in *The Dynamic in Christian Thought* ed. Joseph Papin, Villanova Univ. Press, 1970 p. 263, see pp. 261-62

The Mission of the Church Today

But the problems detailed above cannot be resolved by wishful thinking. Church and its official representatives have to realize their positive role in the socio-political context of India today. This positive and creative approach to the mission of the church implies a certain amount of risk and one has to forgo knowingly and willingly the security provided by the past silence of the church.

1. Social Involvement

If the church does not want to remain an impersonal institution for the salvation of souls or a mere salesman for an abstract doctrine, it has to deal with the actual concerns and needs of people today. This means that it has to get actively involved in the social problems of the Indian masses. Pope John Paul II, profiting from his long experience in Poland has shown through his encyclical *Laborem exercens* how it is possible to go along the lines of a Marxist analysis of society and yet transcend its philosophy. Marxism is correct in affirming the primacy of labour over capital and in insisting that since capital itself is the product of labour it must serve labour. According to the Pope labour includes not only industrial labour but any product of farmers, clerical employees, teachers, social workers, scientists, home-makers, and even managers and those in government. Work itself should be taken not purely objectively in the sense of objects produced by work, but more especially in the subjective dimension of man's personal involvement in work, personal transformation and the actualization of working persons. Whenever capital is not made to serve labour, whether it be in the capitalist system of the West, or in the collectivist form of the Communist countries, the economic system will generate injustices, exclude certain sections of the population from the wealth produced by them, create hardships to great many people and destabilize society. Serving labour means a certain decentralization of power involving labour in decision making, and allowing a certain economic pluralism with some possible forms of co-determination and joint ownership with labour making workers themselves the guardians of the priority of labour over capital. Pope John Paul II has demystified a number of Marxist con-

cepts like "class-struggle" and "laws of history", which were for long taboo in Catholic circles. He resolves them into the simple process of people acting together because they recognize that class solidarity or other forms of group solidarity are the only way in which they can struggle for social justice. In the Pope's perspective the church should have a philosophy of praxis in which people as workers are both the author and subject of history in their collective struggle for justice.

But if this decentralization implied in co-ownership and codetermination should work towards the elimination of unemployment and poverty, it is not enough to leave matters to the dynamics of a free market economy, but needs a certain centralized planning even on the world scale. Owing to the interconnectedness of industries in one country and in the entire world, besides the direct employer of labour in each concern, there should be also an "indirect employer" which comprises labour legislation, conditions of production, availability of markets, training of labour and an overall rational plan for the use of resources and production of goods.

In all these a church actively involved in the real welfare of the people can accomplish a great deal. Its task is not merely to exhort the owners of capital to be generous to the poor and to render them justice. It has especially the duty to conscientize the workers about their own personal dignity and rights and to help them organize themselves in order to see that capital really serves labour. More than any other individual or institution the People of God that has the total welfare of man at heart can and must endeavour to create a general climate in which every form of injustice is condemned and conscientiously avoided. The church should not only encourage the solidarity of the poor with the poor, but in fidelity to the Lord it should identify itself in solidarity with the poor.

2. Need for De-idolization

An important factor that stands in the way of church's identification with the poor is a certain idolization of church structure not only projected by the officers of the institutional church, but also accepted and fostered by the common people

Such a false image of the ministers of God's Word is cherished by the people because such is the image which their prelates have been projecting for long, and also because myth and fantasy provide an easy escape from the real challenges of life. Ordinary people see their bishops only on extraordinary occasions clad in their ceremonial vestments and they can think of their ecclesiastical superiors only with an aura totally removed from and unrelated to the problems of their daily existence. But the people of God cannot be led by myth and mystification. Church leaders are never closer to their people than when they lead them in specific issues that concern religion, morality and civic life in protest marches and demonstrations. What the church stands for is a leadership in ideas. Church authorities can become real leaders only when they can inspire them with creative thinking.

3. From Bureaucracy to Personalism

Another attitude very closely related to this idolization is seeing the church rather as a thing, a mere institution than as persons. A specific Roman contribution of dubious value to the Indian church is a legalist attitude and a habitual bias in favour of the impersonal. Even the pastoral ministry to the people of God is spoken of as the work of saving "souls" as if people were disembodied spirits. Doctrine is more important than the believers, and in cases of doubt presumption is for the law than for the persons for whom law is made. Even those who make beautiful speeches about the dignity and inviolability of the human person, seem to forget in the actual exercise of ecclesiastical authority that those who submit to them in faith, and even the priests and religious who make a voluntary vow or oath of obedience have not abdicated their human dignity or freedom. The Indian church can go a great way towards making itself truly the pilgrim people of God in India if it can remind itself that laws are for man, and not man for the laws, and even the most ancient liturgical texts are not magical formulae but prayers intended for the actual celebration of people today. A few inadequate statements of faith can be tolerated without much hue and cry if people remember the fact that the church was never without the impediment of a great many inaccurate

and even erroneous beliefs shared by both pastors and people in their groping towards the incomprehensible Truth.

4. Preach Christ

Church should not pretend to be anything other than what Christ intended it to be. But often it has unwittingly projected the image of a huge Red Cross organization, or of a local branch of some Western philanthropic agency like Misereor, or the Ford Foundation. Indian church has been in the past so preoccupied with establishing itself as an institution with a plethora of schools, hospitals, orphanages and other establishments of service that it seems to have forgotten its main objective, namely to preach Christ and his message. The special character of christianity is that it has an unique perspective on every aspect of human life and man's various problems. China, India and Greece developed their own unique ethical system based on more or less impersonal and absolutist philosophical perspectives. Hebrews and Muslims translated these moral principles into precepts of the one God who created heaven and earth and condescended to enter into a sort of contract with his own creature, man. But Christianity shows that all the moral principles and precepts have in Christ a new meaning, that of an encounter of man with man himself in the humanity of the Son of God who identified himself with us human beings in everything except sin.

What is lacking in the Christian preaching in India is this unique Christian perspective on problems. What some one has remarked about the writing of Pseudo-Dionysius, who was probably a Syrian bishop of the 5th century, may be said about most of the pastoral letters of our bishops. Though he speaks about the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the sacraments and quotes from the Bible and saints like Ignatius of Antioch, one can seriously doubt whether he was a Christian since he has practically nothing in his writings which a Neo Platonist of his times could not or would not write. Our Christian preaching today gives plenty of pious thoughts, platitudes on moral living, exhortations for conformity to ritual practices and traditions and for obedience to ecclesiastical authority. But it fails to provide an intelligent, convincing and specifically Christian view of man and of the world.

The great contribution made to our age by Pope John Paul II is that he has taken the mystery out of Christian preaching. There is nothing esoteric or mysterious about what Christianity has to proclaim to all people: Our human history is one, and it has a totally new orientation ever since Jesus Christ, the Son of God entered it. As the conciliar proclamations of Vatican II clearly state, "Today God speaks to man not as mere creatures or servants, but as friends, and he lives among them, so that he may invite and take them into fellowship with himself".⁵ What Christ did by revealing the Father and his love was "to fully reveal man to man himself and make his supreme calling clear".⁶ In the sinless Son of God, Crucified, "the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful".⁷ Christ is the goal of human history, the focal point of the longings of history and of civilization, the center of the human race, the joy of every human heart, and the answer to all its yearnings".⁸ In the perspective of a Christian even the sociological and psychological analyses of human problems should not be treated in isolation but as integral to a Christological perspective of man and his world. What India looks for from the church and its spokesmen is an intelligent and courageous defence of the holistic view of man and his destiny offered to us in the Risen Lord.

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5. Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* ¶ 2

6. *Gaudium et Spes* ¶ 22

7. *Ibid*

8. *Ibid* ¶ 14

An Inculturated Ecclesiology

India's population is about 700 million. They make the second largest section of humanity redeemed by Jesus Christ; and as such they constitute an integral part of the "one people of God" according to the wider ecclesiological sense of the phrase used in *Lumen Gentium* (articles 13-16) of Vatican II. The ecclesiology of Vatican II has broader perspectives. It also gives ample scope for exploring wider horizons in the understanding of the role and function of the world religions. To supplement these broader explorations reaching out to the various cultures of the people of God the Council set still clearer perspectives about the positive values found in the religious traditions of mankind. The Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, dealing with the relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions, has positive exhortation to us as follows:

Prudently and lovingly, through *dialogue* and *collaboration* with the followers of other religions, and *in witness of Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve and promote* the spiritual and moral goods found among these men, as well as the values in their society and culture (art. 2).

In the light of the above mentioned guidelines and others of the post-Conciliar Commissions we can safely explore the possibility of an ecclesiology relevant and meaningful in the Indian context which is the habitat of most of the living world religions?

The Indian people of God

Most of the Indian people belong to one or the other of the living world religions such as Hinduism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Sikhism and Buddhism. Christianity is called upon here as a "remnant" to witness Christian faith and life while *acknowledging, preserving and promoting* the spiritual and moral goods found among men of other faiths and among their cultures. How is it possible without prejudice to the traditional exclusivistic ecclesiology? Yet, how far is it feasible to have a certain inclusivistic as well as integral ecclesiology which will honestly incorporate the salutary values of the various sections

of the people of God? This article is only an invitation to further exploration along these lines.

The term "people of God" includes all believers in God, and all human beings by reason of their belongingness to the humanity which Christ took upon himself as his body of operation wherein he worked out his atoning redemption. This forms part of the mystery of incarnation and redemption which is being continued after resurrection by the working of the Holy Spirit who reminds the believers of all that Jesus taught, while revealing continuously new things all along the unfolding of the human history, culture and civilization, things which emerge from the continuous creation process of the Father. People everywhere in the world in some way or other acclaim this continued process of Divine operation in human history, and this acclamation conditions also their religious and spiritual life, to a larger extent, even their socio-moral life. The Indian people of God are no exception to this common experience of mankind.

Most of them believe in one God, the "creator of heaven and earth", the Father who provides everybody the necessary means of life here and hereafter. The foundational philosophical insight of these people about this Reality is that there is only "One Reality and wise men address Him in different ways (Rigveda I: 161.46)". This one Reality is the Lord who envelops and inhabits this universe without leaving any particle of this revolving cosmos out of his reach and touch" (Is. Up. 1). This is the experience which St. Paul shared with the Athenians at Areopagus: "He is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being, as indeed some of your own poets have said; *For we are also his offspring*" (Acts 17: 27-28). In the same way the Indian people of God have such a shared experience, expressed in various shades of meaning. Even about the finalities the Indian religious people have very many things in common to share. The basic insight is that all of us without exceptions are pilgrims, searching for final liberation and moving toward a goal of supreme spiritual fulfillment.

A section of this people of God visualizes this fulfillment to take place in a state of *sāyujya* (union or communion) with a personal dimension of the supreme Reality. This *sāyujya* is further articulated as *mokṣa* or *mukti*, meaning liberation of the spirit from the bondage of the matter. *Nirvāṇa* (blowing off/involution) or *kaivalya* (supreme simplicity) are other alternate

expressions. Some people claim to obtain a glimpse of that final liberation, even while alive in some experiential forms called *saṁādhi* (tranquility of mind), *sthitaprajñā* (steady-consciousness), *sākṣātkāra* (realization) or *jīvanmukti* (live-liberation). These are various kinds of spiritual experience which are by nature partly acquired by means of appropriate *sādhana*s subject to the faith (*śraddhā*) they elicit in God during their period of disciplines and in this sense they are also gifts of God. They are no more to be considered as human prodigies. They are gifts of God given to those who have taken the trouble of strict discipline in life for achieving that part of divine bliss that can be achieved by disposed people who have followed ascetical practices and meditations. The artificial division of the aids of salvation into "natural" and "supernatural" traditionally given by the western scholastic theologians is quite alien to the genius of Indian way of life. Where everything is filled with God and His presence, there cannot be such a division of spheres into "natural" and "supernatural"; and any superiority-claim for one part over the other is just meaningless and self-defeating in the context of the overwhelming divinization of Nature by God, and people's belief thereon. In any case those who believe in the grace-offering activity of God would acknowledge the fact that nobody is or becomes righteous by his own effort but by the benevolent God who according to His own good pleasure, pleased with the good life of devotees, make them righteous and blissful. They also believe that nobody is guaranteed final salvation or liberation from the bondage of sin (*mokṣa*) merely on the basis of nominal registration in a religious sect. Every human being has to work out his salvation in faith (*śraddhā*) and in submission to God's judgement (*vidhī*) which fundamentally is an approval or disapproval of the meritorious or meritless actions of people (*karma*).

Dharma (righteousness) is prescribed to be the moral *sādhana* for final liberation, available to all irrespective of one's level of education or social status. Similarly there are *saṁskāras* (sacraments/ sacred rites) prescribed for spiritual purification, while *tapas* (asceticism) and *prayaścitta* (penance), *dhyāna* or *Īśvara-praṇidhāna* (meditation) are practised for moral rectification as well as spiritual satisfaction. These are considered to be the appropriate means of religious perfection. Fasting and abstinence, pilgrimages and sacred baths, almsgiving, prayer and vows, repentance and confession of sins, and other expiatory

acts are all zealously performed to achieve greater spiritual fulfilment.

Among such devout people of God as in India what could be the meaningful role of the Church which claims to have a unique salutary means to offer? Can a Church which has very much compromised with the demands of a pleasure seeking consumer society of the Western capitalism, relaxing much of the rigour of its founder's vision of the new "Kingdom of God" which does not consist in "eating and drinking, but in peace, righteousness and joy in Spirit" (Rom. 14: 17), command respect among the people of God who are mostly exploited and discriminated by the same capitalistic patrons of the western Church? The Indian people continue to strike a balance between the values of matter and those of the spirit. They form their own right conscience about moral rectitude and social justice on a personal level, and they are free to do so just as any human being is free to follow his own right conscience. Further a Church which operates through agencies of political diplomatic corps and allied international agencies controlled by superpower economics cannot be stainless in matters of strict social justice, equity and respect of the cultural individualities of peoples.

Pluralistic Ecclesiology

If the concept of the "people of God" is having widest denotation the ecclesiology we have to develop should have wider connotation. It will have to touch upon many aspects of the life of the people of God scattered all over the world with problems peculiar to each cultural group. Church being primarily an assembly of the believers in Christ, is a worshipping community with the memorial of the Lord ever presented to its consciousness. The faith of the believers centred around the memories of the first Apostles and disciples about their Master is the core-reality of Christianity. This core reality is ever vivified in every memorial celebration by the brethren who proclaim their faith in the Master and enjoins new members from the wider humanity, the "people of God". This is the third dimension of the Church, namely, *fellowship*, the other two being *memory of the Lord* and *faith in Him*. Christian Community, the Church, then, is a core-group of committed believers in Christ, who have a mandate towards all other brethren of the family of God the Father. This core-group is formed wherever the memory of the Lord Jesus Christ is acknowledged, proclaimed

and shared in fellowship. This has to be according to the nature of the cultural and socio-economic conditions of the community emerging in some part of the world as the result of the proclamation of a committed disciple of the Lord. Faith is generated after the hearing of the word of God which has to be proclaimed with prophetic conviction. All these phases of the formation of the core group Christianity depend on the cultural receptivity on the part of the hearing people as well as on the ability of inculturating the message by the disciple of the Lord. In conjunction with these two the Holy Spirit becomes the core-spirit of the new body of Christ. He then builds the community with the variety of gifts. He gives to the members and with those already implanted among them in their own cultural history by the Father of creation. Because of the variety of gifts which are meant for achieving a variety of purposes, there arise various Christian Communities with different functions and yet with common faith and common fellowship. This phenomenon already happened in the past is being repeated again and again.

The universal Church has to admit this phenomenon as the basis for developing its own ecclesiology to be more related to the pluralistic conditions of the people of God. In order to do this the official Church represented by the holy magisterium should be authentic to its Master's mandate, to be really a humble servant of all the brethren of the human family of God on earth. The universal Church should honestly represent the pluralistic elements of the believing brethren, from whichever part of the world they come, in the administration of the affairs of the universal Church. It is not a diplomat of the Vatican state that should function as a liaison person between the universal pastor and the scattered people of God. This arrangement gives only a political colour and tone to the Church which is truly a religious community. This also keeps the Christian communities of a nation constantly under the suspicion of being controlled by foreign agencies and diplomats, a suspicion in the eyes of the non-Christian rulers of a secular, democratic, socialistic and sovereign country like India. This had created problems in the past especially during the emergency times of 1975-77, and it tarnishes the authentic spiritual dimension of the Christian Missions in this country. Is there some "divine sanction" for this diplomatic arrangement which might be defended perpetually on the basis of some elastic exegesis of certain biblical texts or some

patristic teachings? If there is no such basis, it is a matter of practical arrangement on some conventions for a time. Times have changed, conventions can be reconstrued and structures should be changed to suit the changed mentalities of peoples as well as to the pluralistic needs of various cultures and contexts. Why can't there be a reverse arrangement? Namely, a representative or two of the Christian Churches of various nations could be posted in the central administrative system of the universal Church; they could give constant feed back from the people to the universal pastor and vice versa. Of course, this may not be a very serious matter to be implemented soon in order to make our Church administration pluralistic. There are still more serious administrative reforms to be tried in view of making the presence of the Christian Community felt among the people of God on a larger context of cultural pluralism existing in the world today.

We need an ecclesiology which allows real pluralistic expressions in worship and human service. Uniformity principle cannot any more be really catholic: unity of faith and diversity of expressions alone can be a valid principle of coherence and harmony in a pluralistic world which can tolerate only a pluralistic theology and for that reason also a pluralistic ecclesiology. Hence an ecclesiology which allows real pluralism in matters of religious expressions based on a correct understanding of the relativity of various cultures can render a lot of service to humanity implimenting the directives of dialogue and collaboration. Any absolutist claim of a particular culture and its philosophy or world vision or cosmology to have exclusive rights to articulate the faith content of Christianity will deny the equal right-privilege of every other culture for the same task. This will be a violation of the justice due to all Christian communities belonging to diverse cultural settings.

The role of the Christian communities of various nations can be further described in terms of the human needs of the suffering millions of the people of God. The Church has to share the vision of Christ himself. The exhortation of St. James the apostle, is a good reminder in this respect. The faith without acts of charity is dead. The concern of the Church, then, must

be an integral one totally geared toward the liberation of the suffering humans, toward the rectification of the exploited justice of all human beings. If this can be one of the most urgent tasks of Christian witnessing, we have to develop a new ecclesiological consciousness, the emphases of which would not be on issues of authority and administration, conversion and enumeration, but on matters of human freedom, justice and human solidarity and fellowship which are more vital issues for the survival of the majority of the human race in the world today. If the ecclesiology of the bygone centuries and decades dealt more profoundly with matters of authority, primacy, infallibility, power, diplomacy, hierarchy, legality, collegiality, Roman concentricism and Judaic ethnocentrism, Latinism or Orientalism and many other things irrelevant for the common mass of the people of God, who are struggling hard to find their way to their Father's home with at least the minimum to eat, cloth and shelter themselves, the ecclesiology of our present and future prospect should deal more honestly and impartially with the problems of humanity of the world at large and the people of the developing countries in particular. While aiming at the spiritual liberation of the people the Church of each and every particular culture and non-christian context should also strive to integrate the value systems of their neighbours through dialogue and collaboration and give leadership for a common pilgrimage and propose the ways and means to reach the common goal of humanity, the kingdom of God, here and hereafter.

An inculturated ecclesiology

Coming down once again to the Indian scene the Church in India has the natural right to grow into its own fulness in the habitat of its culture, philosophy, aesthetics, art and architecture, poetry, music and dance, asceticism and mysticism, theology and ecclesiology, administration and jurisprudence. Any injunction from outside, secular or religious, native or foreign interfering with the fundamental rights of the indigenous community will be a violence on its natural growth. It will be an injustice and hence such injunctions coming from any corner should be critically evaluated and if found unjust should be resisted vigorously with conviction and commitment and in-

the spirit of true freedom of the children of God which is also guaranteed in the Constitution of our sovereign republic.

This is not equivalent to grant a blank cheque of cultural identity to any of the existing ritualistic traditions of the Christian communities known under their respective names of Rites. Far from it. In fact none of them has yet incultured themselves in the Indian culture and spiritual traditions. They retain and struggle to maintain intact the vestiges of their foreign roots. Catholicity and culture for their protagonists are what their foreign masters have imparted to them: They prefer to be aliens at home. This is a great anomaly. Under some pretext of conforming to the "universal catholicity", the fundamentalists belonging to these Rites keep away from the native cultural values in a certain attitude of untouchability and defend with tooth and nail the outdated and sterile ritualistic practices of foreign cultures which have already lost their meaning and significance to the contemporary generation.

Further, the territorial and juridical interests of some Church leaders have reduced local Christian dioceses into some sort of ritualistic cobweb out of which neither they nor their followers would get rid and they remain in their own self-imposed "bondage of legalism". In some other areas the faithful are divided into warring factions because their pastor himself does not know the language of the local people. Still in other areas tension mounts up because the pastors are aliens, transferred from other places simply on "Church-politics." In such situations mere administrative transfers as that of a Roman civil service system does not make people feel at home with their Bishops and vice-versa. These and similar other problems are there which require immediate attention in the matter of inculturation.

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Idea of a Salvific Community in the Bhagavad Gita.

Any serious theological reflection on the Church should take into account the spiritual heritage of the land in which the Church tries to take root. The Spirit of God manifest in Jesus Christ is at work in the spiritual heritage of every culture transforming it gradually into the new creation in Christ. If the Church strives to be the sign and agent of this new creation it has to assimilate into its life and thought the 'fruits of the Spirit' already present in the spiritual heritage of the land. An Indian ecclesiology has therefore to look deep into the Scriptures and religious traditions of India to perceive there the grace and challenges of the Spirit.

Of all the sacred Scriptures the Gita has a unique role in shaping the life and destiny of the people of India. The Gita takes up some of the basic questions of spirituality and tries to discuss them in relation to the socio cultural problems of the times. What the Gita offers is a spirituality of involvement and struggle. In it the individual gets an intrinsic relationship to society, and society to the universal historical process. A theological analysis of this twofold relationship will offer certain insights that are significant for an Indian ecclesiology. Such an analysis can be done only after clarifying the *Sitz im Leben* of the Gita.

Gita in Context

Three theological trends mark the background of the Gita: The Vedic traditions proposed a religiosity that was predominantly cultic; this led to the emergence of the priestly caste (the Brahmins) as a power-group in the society. The Upanishadic sages presented a spirituality that was basically mystical and introspective; this gave rise to an elitistic mentality in religious circles. The Sankhya philosophers advocated the gulf between the spiritual and the material elements of life; they insisted that retirement from active life was necessary to liberate the spiritual principle in oneself. All these three trends gave rise to a certain negative attitude towards involvement in the affairs of

(4)

this world. People seeking God realization were dominated by the ideas of asceticism and renunciation. Different orders of monks and sages, ascetics and friars prevailed.¹

The vast masses of people however lived in the midst of the struggles of life. Cult, contemplation and asceticism did not answer their existential problems. Their life was very much shaped by the caste system, which was controlled by the priestly and intellectual aristocracy of the time. People were confined to rigid caste structures, which set up barriers between human individuals and communities. In this context issues like the basic equality of man, liberation through involvement in the affairs of this world and the love of God which breaks through the caste barriers became very relevant. The Gita takes up these basic issues and tries to offer a new understanding of the relationship between God, man and the world. We shall focuss our attention on the positive meaning that the Gita gives to the building up of an integrated community within a broken society.

Individual and Society

1. The Gita accepts the fact of the caste system prevailing in the society, but does not approve of the inhuman form it has taken. There is a serious attempt made in the Gita to reflect on the differences that do exist among individuals and communities. In this reflection process the Gita looks beyond the sociological structure of the castes and transcends the religious sanction given to the existing caste system. The problem posited in its first chapter is basically the problem regarding the inner contradiction of the traditional understanding of the caste system. If Arjuna were to fight in obedience to his caste duty (*jati dharma*) he would only destroy his clan (1/42) and thus act against his family duty (*kula-dharma*)². By unfolding the conflict between *jati-dharma* and *kula-dharma* existing in the caste structure, the Gita tries to delve deeper and discover the true meaning of the *Dharma* which critically transcends the caste bias and reaches out to the universal brotherhood of man.

1. G. S. Khair. *Quest for the original Gita*, Somaiya Publications, Bombay, 1969, pp. 42-45.

2. Francis D'Sa. "Dharma as Delight in Cosmic Welfare: A Study of Dharma in the Gita", in *Biblehashyam*, Dec. 1980, 337-341.

2. The theological basis for this broader perspective is the experience of the universal immanence of the Divine. 'The Lord dwells in the heart of all beings'. (18/61, 15/15, 13/18). He is the 'source of all' (7/10, 9/18, 10/20), the 'life in all' (7/9, 15/14) and the 'end for all' (9/18, 10/20). He is 'in everything' (2/17, 9/4, 18/46) and 'everything is in Him' (9/4, 8/22, 6/29). This experience of the universal immanence of the Divine is presented in the Gita in personalistic categories, thus going beyond the upanishadic experience. It is not enough to see the Divine Self in all beings, all beings in Him, but one has to see the Lord: 'see ME everywhere and everything in ME' (6/30). 'I am the source of everything (10/8, 11/4) and the 'support of everything' (9/4) and the 'final state of everything' (7/6, 9/34). This universalistic and personalistic approach of the Gita brings out two facts that are important for a theological interpretation of society: (a) among human individuals there is a basic equality based on the divine immanence; (b) the individuals have a personal worth coming from being the objects of the Lord's love (1/11, 9/31, 18/61, 4/3).

3. How then do differences creep into the human society? The obvious answer was given in terms of the caste structure which has its foundation in the karma-rebirth theory. The Gita, however, speaks of the *gunas*, which account for the differences among human individuals. The three *gunas* are the 'constituent strands of Nature' ultimately emerging from the Divine Self. (7/12-14). 'The *gunas* determine the human receptivity to the divine creativity and hence only in terms of the *gunas* does the Gita interpret the differences found in society (4/13). Ancestral lineage, sociological functions or religious traditions are not the real basis for the caste divisions. "The principle of birth is not the criterion of the social division in the Gita".³ A person is not a 'brahmin' just because he is born of a brahmin family, nor a 'sudra' because of his sudra family background. The *salvic gunas* make a person a 'brahmin', and the *tamasic gunas* make one a 'sudra'. A 'brahmin' is one who is endowed with 'calm self-restraint, ascetic practice, purity, long-suffering, and uprightness, wisdom in theory as in practice, and religious faith' (18/42). A 'kshatriya' is one who is characterized by 'high courage, ardour, endurance, skill in battle, unwillingness to flee, an open hand, and a lordly mien' (18/43). Peasants-and-artisans are those

3. H. S. Sinha, *Communism and Gita*, Concept Publications, Delhi, 1979, p. 156.

who' till the fields, protect the king, and engage in trade' whereas 'works whose very soul is service inhere the very nature of the sudras' (18/44). "On such an understanding of caste and caste-duty, it is not possible to say to which caste a person belongs merely from his 'origins'. One will first have to know his hidden potentialities-potentialities which can be actualised only when adequate conditions are made available."⁴

4. The Gita thus overcomes the contradictions implied in the traditional interpretation of the caste structure in terms of birth and clan. The Gita looks at the caste differences from a spiritual point of view, which enables it to affirm that human persons belonging to all castes are basically equal before the Lord: all are acceptable to the Lord! "Whosoever makes ME his haven, base-born though he may be, yes, women too and artisans, even serfs, theirs is to tread the highest way." (*te 'pi yānti parām gatim*) (9/32). The Lord accepts the human persons not in terms of their noble birth, but on account of their genuine *bhakti*: "In whatsoever way devoted persons approach ME in that same way do I return their love. Whatever their occupation and wherever they may be, they all follow in MY footsteps" (4/11). What is decisive is not the social position but the spiritual disposition (9/26). Even sinners are thus justified before the Lord through *bhakti* (9/30). In the spirituality of the Gita genuine *bhakti* cuts through all caste barriers and cuts the root of a dehumanising caste mentality. The Gita offers a vision that enables one to 'see with an equal eye a brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog and an outcast' (5/18), to 'treat friends and enemies, saints and sinners with equanimity' (6/9).

Be True to Yourself

5. What the Gita proposes is a holistic view of society. As parts of an organism individuals are related to one another. "Gita stands for an organic conception of the society."⁵ Only a healthy interaction of individuals can safeguard the integration of society through individuals, and the integration of individuals through society. Such an interaction, however, is made possible only if individuals become aware of their genuine worth, their

4. Francis D'Sa, "Caste: Symbol or System?" in *Negations*, Jan. 1982, pp. 19-20.

5. Radhakrishnan, *Bhagavad Gita*, George Allen, London, p. 161.

potentialities, their innate *gunas* and the corresponding functions. This self-discovery is an integral part of what the Gita calls *buddhiyogam* (18/57, 10/10, 2/50). Know what one really is means to know one's *svabhava* and the consequent *svadharma*. One becomes aware of them not in the light of the dictates of the existing caste structures but through a meditative probing into the *gunas* that make up oneself. A man born in a sudra family may, for instance, discover and manifest *salvic* qualities in himself and thus pursue the *dharma* of the 'brahmin' for the integration of society. In this sense the Gita demands that the discovery of the *svabhava* and pursuit of the *svadharma* is a vital element in spirituality and social integration. "By doing the work that is proper to him and rejoicing in the doing, a man succeeds and perfects himself" (18/45). Even if one finds that one's own duty is not dignified, one should not covet after another's duty (3/35, 18/46) for it is self-alienating to do another's duty and hence destructive (3/35). It is therefore detrimental to the person and to the society to interpret *svadharma* only in terms of the existing caste structures. The variety of functions within a society may lead to a hierarchical subordination under the pressure of social circumstances: this may further lead to caste exploitation. Against this the Gita raises a prophetic protest upholding the basic equality of men.

6. The discovery of *svabhava* and the pursuit of *svadharma* is a life-long process. The dynamic element in this process is the inner freedom of the person: 'freedom from the thought of 'I', force, pride, desire, anger and possessiveness' (18/53, 12/13, 2/71, 16/21), freedom from 'passion and hate' (2/61), freedom from 'clinging on to the fruits of action' (12/11, 2/51). A person who has this inner freedom will be ever active, just as the Lord is ever active (3/22, 4/14); freedom makes a person enter into the divine activity without claiming the fruits of action for himself. Hence 'detachment from craving for the fruits of action' becomes a guiding factor in the ethics of the Gita. "The man who sees the work that is his to do, yet covets not its fruits, he it is who at once renounces and yet works." (6/1, 18/11.) At a time when ascetics and sages overemphasised renunciation and asceticism Gita insists that the way to liberation is 'not the way of renouncing actions' (6/1, 18/11), but that of fulfilling them

according to the *svadharma*: 'you are the master of your actions' (2/47) and you have to do them 'unto perfection' (2/50). A liberated person engaged in action will keep up his equanimity 'in success and failure' (2/48, 4/22), 'in pleasure and pain' (2/38, 6/7, 14/24) and 'in honour and disgrace' (12/19, 14/25).

Society and Cosmic Welfare

7. What has been said till now describes only the subjective disposition with which one should fulfil the *svadharma* in society. Is there any objective motivation that comes from the finality of the society? The Gita answers this question in terms of *lokasangraha*: cosmic welfare demands the discovery of *svabhava* and the pursuit of *svadharma*. The liberated person will engage in action 'with a passionate longing to bring about harmony and welfare in the world' (3/25). The individual is a constitutive part of the cosmos and is responsible for the destiny of the cosmos. As long as the individual is dominated by selfishness (*ahamkara*) the world lies in bondage (7/27). Hence the liberation of the world – and of society – demands the self-less (*nirahamkara*) involvement of individuals for the welfare of all. One has therefore to fulfil the *svadharma* in the society with a genuine 'delight to bring about the welfare of all beings' (5/25, 12/4). 'Joy in doing the *svadharma*' is the ethos that guides the relationship of individuals to society (18/45).

8. The Gita interprets therefore the *svadharma* as a constitutive part of the cosmic *dharma*. However, the foundation of the cosmic *dharma* is the Lord (14/27, 7/11). The ongoing process of bringing about harmony in the world and welfare to all beings is ultimately the work of the Lord. (15/17, 9/4). In times of crisis it is the Lord who comes down to the earth in order to 'reestablish the cosmic *dharma*' (4/7-8). Struggle for justice in the society is ultimately a divine work. The human individuals are called upon to participate in this struggle 'on the arena of *dharma*' (1/1). Hence the demand to 'surrender all *dharma*s to the Lord and to take refuge in Him alone' (18/66, 12/6, 10, 18/56). "That which the Gita teaches is not a human, but a divine action; not the performance of social duties, but the abandonment of all other standards of duty or conduct for a selfless performance of the divine will working through our nature; not social service, but the action of the Best, the God-possessed, the Master-men done impersonally for the sake of the world and as a sacrifice to Him who stands behind man and Nature."⁶ True

6. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, Pondicherry, 1972, p. 28.

liberation of individuals through society and that of society through individuals comes by means of *bhakti* (surrender in love) which is enlightened by *jñāna* (in this connection, awareness of *svadharma*) and actualised in *karma* (self less commitment to the welfare of the world).

The salvific community

This theological analysis of the interaction between individual and society shows that Gita interprets the individual's commitment to society in terms of a universal process. The efforts of the individual person to overcome his *ahamkāra* liberate society from its universal bondage. These efforts are being supported by the salvific action of the Lord (10/11,18/58,62). History and society, time and space, become thus the *locus* of the salvific process. "Time and space become personal through relationship to the Lord. Time is saved from its cyclic quest and brought home to its Lord. It is a live moment when man stands addressed by God as his Bhakta and friend".⁷

When commitment to society becomes intrinsically salvific, the community of those who are thus committed gets a salvific role in society. The Gita does not explicitly speak of such a community. However, there is a clear demand placed on the liberated persons to rebuild society: guide others (3/26) and enlighten them with the love of the Lord (10/9), for the 'world follows the standard set by the enlightened ones' (3/21). Besides, the Gita brings out certain fundamental attitudes of an integrated person, which necessarily lead to the building up of an integrated community: compassion and concern for others, friendliness and approachability (12/13-15) detachment from petty family interests (13/9), freedom from egoism, pride, fear, desire, anger and possessiveness (18/53).

The 'Church' is the sacrament of the salvific presence of the divine Love in time and space. As sacrament it is the sign and agent of the new creation. The Gita too envisages the interaction of individual and society in terms of the God-generated process of the creation of the new humanity based on the Love of the Lord.

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7. Samuel Rayan. "Indian Theology and the Problem of History", in R. W. Taylor (ed) *Society and Religion*, CLS, Bangalore, 1976, p. 175.

BULLETIN

The Ecclesial Structures of Thomas Christians of Malabar

(A study of the Ecclesiology of the Malabar Church as seen in the *Varttamanappustakam*)

In this small essay we attempt to delineate the ecclesial structures of the Malabar Church community in the 18th century. Our study is based on the famous *Varttamanappustakam*, which is a contemporary account of the history of the Malabar Church between the year 1773 and 1786 with special emphasis of the events connected with the journey from Malabar to Rome, via Lisbon and back undertaken by Malpan Mar Joseph Kariattil and Kattanar Thomma Paremmackal. This narrative of the travel was written by Paremmackal himself.¹ The *Varttamanappustakam* is the narrative of a critical period in the history of the Malabar Church and hence we can see well the various ecclesial structures in the various levels of its life. Here we shall see how the whole community acted at its different levels of action through its representatives. There is here no distinction between the hierarchy and the lay people. The whole community of priests and lay men together acts, on the level of local community through its local church assembly and through its general church assembly on the level of the whole Malabar Church.

I. *Varttamanappustakam* of Thomas Paremmackal

Varttamanappustakam written by Thomas Paremmackal, a veteran leader of the Church of Malabar at one of its crucial periods, and the historical realities described are the result of first hand knowledge of actual practice and tradition. Hence our

1. Paremmackal (1736 - 1799) and Mar Joseph Kariattil (d. 1786) were sent by the Church Assembly of Malabar to Rome and Portugal. Mar Kariattil, doctor of Theology from Propaganda College, Rome, was made Archbishop of Cranganore in 1783. But before he reached his see, he died in Goa. His see was ruled by Paremmackal as Governador, until his death in 1799.

analysis has the value of a real study of the historical document that represents the tradition of the Thomas Christians of Malabar. Being a son of the community, in deep love for its tradition and patrimony, and ready to defend the rights of the Church community we can see in Paremmackal a witness of the real tradition which he wants to preserve and hand over at any cost. There was no question of compromise or yielding. He was not afraid of speaking out the truth, no matter whether it would create enemies for himself or it would be a discredit to himself and his community. He told the truth, sometimes even very pungently and in hard terms. Though his work is primarily a travel story, he was a historian and documented his statements whenever and wherever possible.²

The *Varltamānappustakam* as the name itself suggests is a book containing the news or narratives written by Paremmāckal Thoma Kattanar³ of the travel made by Mar Joseph Kariattil and himself at the end of the 18th century to plead the cause of the Church of Malabar in Lisbon and Rome. They were sent by the Malabar Church assembly, which found itself unable to suffer any more the outrages and unchristian ways of the missionaries to the Thomas Christians. Written in Malayalam, the language of Malabar, this is the first travelogue in all Indian Languages. This is at the same time a document of history and a literary piece of great value. It breathes out the aspirations of the Malabar Church and proclaims the age old ecclesiastical and ecclesiological traditions.

With the *Varltamanappustakam*, we are in the last quarter of the 18th century and the events narrated in the *Varltamānappustakam* starts in the year 1773.

2. Unfortunately much of the documentation has not come down to us. Whatever we possess is of immense value for the understanding of the life of the Malabar Church.

3. *Varltamanappustakam* is a combined word, made of two words *Varltamanam* = News, or narrative and *Pustakam* = book. Hence it is a book of narrative.

4. Kattanār is a Malayalam word which was used to designate a priest.

Paremmackal begins the *Varttamanappustakam* with the story of the death of Mgr. Florence, the Bishop of Verapoly and describes what happened after that, which changed the whole course of Malabar Church History. He writes "Mgr. Florence of Areopadis and Vicar Apostolic of Malabar⁵, who resided at Verapoly died in 1773. Mgr. Salvador dos Reis was the Archbishop of Cranganore. In conformity with their custom, many from the Syrian rite Churches of Malabar viz. those of Angamale, Alengat, Paravur, Kuthiathod and many others, assembled at Verapoly and were about to bury the bishop according to their custom and rite. Padre Anasthasius of St. Jerome, the Provincial Superior of the Carmelite Padres, who was elected and appointed by all the Padres to take the place of the bishop until the arrival of another bishop, came up and spoke as follows to the priests and laymen of the Syrian rite churches: "What business have you to come here now? Your bishop is the one who resides at Pukotta. This bishop is ours. Hence, it is our right, not yours, to bury him. Stand aside, therefore and let us bury our bishop according to our customs". Those of the Malabar Churches were thus excluded and the Padres buried the bishop according to their rite".⁶

It is the events that followed this tragic happening that Paremmackal describes in the *Varttamanappustakam*. The insulted Churches assembled at Angamaly and decided to send letters to other Churches asking for a general church Assembly to deal with the matters. By virtue of the invitation of these few churches assembled at Angamaly all churches of Malabar assembled at Alengat. As the General Church Assembly gathered, the church assembly of Edappally took their complaints (against the bishop) to the gathered general assembly of Churches to find a solution and decide the matter. The Padres of Verapoly, as they heard of the gathering of the general Assembly, were

5. Malabar here stands for the archdiocese of Cranaganore and the diocese of Cochin. The vicar apostolic of Malabar exercised jurisdiction in the places where the Dutch impeded the Prelates of Cranganore and Cochin (under the Portuguese Patronage) from exercising their jurisdiction.

6. *Varttamanappustakam*, rendered into English by Placid Podipara. *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 190 Roma 1971 p. 31 (Hereafter V.)

afraid and they sent two Padres to apologise and they executed a document called the Patiola before the Church Assembly to the effect that they would respect all the customs of the Malabar Church. But the later chapters of the V. shows that the Padres did not abide by their promises and even the new Bishop who was very friendly with the Church Assemblies at first, began to dishonour the customs, practices and traditions of the Thomas Christians. Hence again the general Assembly gathered and decided to send a delegation to Rome and Portugal to plead for the rights of the churches and to bring their complaints to the Queen of Portugal and the Pope in Rome and also to ask for an indigenous Bishop. Above all the Church assembly commissioned the delegation to present to the Queen and the Pope, the question of the reunion of the Jacobite Bishop Mar Thoma as the new Bishop too was unwilling to accept fearing that he would lose the power over the Thomas Christians. The delegation consisted of Mar Joseph Kariattil and Paremmackal Thoma Kathanar, the author of the Varttamanappustakam. The Varttamanappustakam narrates the whole story of their travel. After much difficulties Mar Kariattil was nominated and consecrated Archbishop of Cranganore in 1779 and obtained permission to receive Mar Thoma into the catholic fold. But unfortunately Kariattil died in the year 1786 at goa, on his way back to Malabar. Paremmackal succeeded him as the Governador until his death in 1799. The Varttamanappustakam contains all the details of these happenings until the death of Mar Kariattil.

What interests us in the whole story of the Varttamanappustakam and the narratives of Paremmackal is mostly the personal reflections of the author as well as the facts related to the tradition of the Church. Every chapter of the book has a part of narration of facts or events and another part the reflection on the facts or events. These reflections of Paremmackal (which he calls "*Vicaram*" = thought, or reflection,) do really reveal much of the traditions of the Malabar Church, especially the ancient ecclesial structures.

II. The Ecclesial Structures of the Malabar Church

The Varttamanappustakam well shows that the Church community is one of love and is the sheep whose shepherd is the Bishop. Bishop is not the ruler or administrator. He is the shepherd and the community which is the sheep is a communion of brothers *Jyesthanujanmar*, a terminology that occurs very often in

the book. But this community of love had different levels of structures which could be divided mainly into two: (1) that of the local Church (2) that of the whole Malabar Church. On the first level (level of the Churches) it acts through its local church assembly and on the level of the Malankara *Itavaka*⁷ it acts through the general church assembly.

The word *Pallikar* in singular signifies the local church members or churches and in plural denotes a few of the member Churches of the General Church Assembly. We find in the *Varttamanappustakam* that a few churches together also have a role to play which we cannot classify as a level or fixed unit. We are not in a position to say how they were composed. But, from the *Varttamanappustakam* it is clear that on the regional level the community of a few churches also had a valid role and right accepted by all.

General Church Assembly

Strictly speaking the narrative of the book is concerned with the things related to the whole Church of Malabar. Hence *exprofesso* it describes only the whole Malabar Church Community as the agent of action – the community acting through its “Malankara Yogam-General Church Assembly. This is, because, according to the very ecclesiological principles of the Malabar Church, as depicted in the book the matters under consideration are beyond the limits and capacity of one local church or of a few of the churches together. Still the turn of events narrated there, is such that we get a good idea of the mode of action of the local community and a few of the local communities together.

Convoking the General Church Assembly

The first few chapters of the *Varttamanappustakam*⁸ reveal how the church community as a whole is the agent of action,

7. The Word *Etavaka* is used today for a local parish where as in the ancient system “*Etavaka*” denotes the Diocese and is a word equivalent to the syriac “*Maraisa*”. *Etavaka* = the property of the Pastor = Bishop.

8. The Chapters that is of relevance for our study are mainly chs. 1 – 10, 35, and 45 – 55. In this study we will not analyse the details but shall only indicate them according to the document before us.

acting through its representatives and its local and general assemblies. We have already described above how the representatives of the Syrian Churches were excluded on the occasion of the burial of Mgr. Florence. The excluded Church representatives gathered at Angamale to decide over what course of action they have to take. Paremmackal writes: "The representatives of the Church left Verapoly with great mental anguish and assembled at Angamaly to agree upon what they should do to blot out the disgrace and insult inflicted upon them. But the Churches that were represented at Verapoly, could not do anything effectively. The vicar apostolic and the Padres had previously been offending the Malabar Church in many ways as they did then. They therefore invited all the churches of the Malabar Church to assemble at Angamale. Their journey to Verapoly at the death of the Bishop, the words the Padres spoke and the funeral services conducted without their participation were made known to all in the invitation letter. The object of the assembly was to deal with these and many other issues".⁹

Now, it is the reflection of Paremmackal on these events, that gives us the clue to the ancient system. He says that what the representatives of Churches did was according to the age old tradition of the Malabar Church. "Matters pertaining to the whole community was not decided by one or two churches; all churches used to assemble together to deal with such matters"¹⁰.

Now this shows that a few churches could take their complaints to the general assembly. Paulinus refers to it in his *Viaggio*, where he says that all churches used to join together to defend an offended church¹¹. We have other witnesses too. An Italian Manuscript kept at the Propaganda archives, entitled "*Istoria della Missione-del Malabar*" written in 1750 says: "In all the churches the Christians deal with ecclesiastical affairs in their assemblies composed of clergy and faithful. To these assemblies they convoke those of the neighbouring churches if the matter is of greater importance, and also consult them, and if the matter is very important they convoke all the churches of the kingdom and sometimes the whole diocese..."¹²

9. V. P. 32.

10. V. P. 33.

11. Paulinus da S. Bartholomeo. *Viaggio alle India Orientali* India Ori Roma, 1796, p. 137ff.

12. Quoted by P. J. Podipara in V. p. 33 footnote 8.

Now what we see in the following chapter is that by the power of the letter "the representatives of the churches set out for Angamale".¹³ Many others though hesitant at the beginning, "at last started under the conviction that their presence also was imperative".¹⁴ This cominent of Paremmackal is significant. By the power of the letter (*kuri*), all the representatives felt obliged to go to the general gathering. And Paremmackal says that "the gathering of the Churches at Angamale was in conformity with what our forefathers used to do and it was in conformity with the spirit of the community".¹⁵

The Power of the General Assembly

Now, chapter III reveals the power of the General Church Assembly. The Padres hearing that the church assembly had gathered sent word that they were ready to apologise before the assembly for what they have done in excluding the church representatives from the funeral celebrations and were ready to "make the reparation the assembly prescribed". This very clearly shows that the church assembly was a power greater than any power in the Malabar Church. This will be clear when we analyse the fact that the church assembly of Edappally brought its complaints to the general church assembly.

This fact reveals two things: First, the general church assembly was supreme and had power even over the Bishop and the Bishop was answerable to the church assembly and that it had the power to solve differences between the particular churches or persons and the Bishop. Secondly, that it reveals another system in the Malabar Church that no punishment could be meted out without consulting at least two church assemblies.

Chapter IV narrates how the Padres and Bishop Florence manhandled and killed the parish Priest of Edappally, putting him into prison under starvation and how they even denied the sacraments and last things for which he asked at the hour of his death, for no crime that he had done. He was taken by armed force by the Padres from the protection of the king of Edappally whose protection he had taken fearing the cruelties of the Padres. Not only that the Padres had tried to confiscate the key of the church of Edappally because the people complained about what

13. V. P. 34.

14. V. P. 34.

15. V. P. 35.

16. V. P. 37.

the Padres did. Since they could not achieve their end the Bishop and Padres proclaimed interdict on the Church of Edappally. Now, the church of Edappally hearing of the General Assembly brought their complaints to the general assembly.

The General Assembly and the Bishop

This event shows that the General Assembly had power even over the decisions and interdicts of the Bishop. From the reflection of Paremmackal it is clear that the Bishop could not mete out punishment without consulting at least four church assemblies. He says: "All are aware that according to the ancient custom of the Malabar Church no punishment could be inflicted unless the crime was proved before the representatives of four churches. The ecclesiastical and civil laws prescribe that at least two witnesses should testify against the statement of the accused before he could be punished."¹⁷

Again in chapter 45 we see how in the question of the students sent by the General Assembly Paremmackal and Kariattil say that for bringing the students they needed no permission of the Bishop, as they had letters from the Church Assembly to the Pope to that effect. I brought the boys by the order of the Malabar Church Assembly and to that effect I have with me the letters addressed to the Pope."¹⁸ And Paremmackal says, from the words of the Cardinal of the Propaganda "it was revealed that the Padres among other things had reported that our Assembly was to be controlled".¹⁹ And Paremmackal goes on to say that if you knew really the high standing and the unity of the people "he would have realised that the bishop could not send the syrian boys from Malabar without the consent of our Assembly, or if he sent them, Propaganda could not force our Assembly to accept them should it refuse to do so".²⁰ And the letter given to the Pope also reveals the power of the Assembly. Again the fact that the church assembly had made the Padres write the *patiola* (document of the Assembly) shows also the power of the Assembly on all matters.

17. V. P. 41.
20 P. 133-34.

18. V. P. 132.

19. P. 133.

The Church structures at two levels

Hence we see that in the Malabar Church there are two levels of structures in the Church (1) *the level of the local Church* and (2) *the level of the Malabar Church*. Hence the two units of the ecclesiastical community are the local eucharistic community which acts through its church assembly consisting of the representatives priests and lay men together with the eldest priest as the head of the community. The second is the Malabar Church which acts through its General Church assembly. Perhaps in between, though not a stable unit is the union of a few local churches which also participates in the powers of the General Church Assembly. But what is most important here is that these church communities are communities of love, communities of brotherhood *Jyesthanujanmar* united in love.

Community of love and not of law

The very description by Paremmackal of the General Church assembly at Angamale, shows this love and unity even when it was divided. It reveals also the manner of convocation also. Some forty or fifty churches from the South and North assembled at Angamale. The Church of Angamale provided those assembled with fuel and salt to prepare the food and oil to light the lamps. Not to waste time awaiting the arrival of the other churches those assembled began the sessions, one until ten in the morning and another till 4 in the evening. The sessions were held in the cathedral church. Kattanar Kuriaep Panamkuzha of Kuravilangadu the oldest and one well-versed in the traditions, took the first seat, the other *Kattanars* (priests) and *Mappilas* (laymen) were seated in order. The young and the inexperienced priests expected the arrival of the elder ones.

This description shows that this was a community that lived in mutual respect keeping up the traditions, where age and experience were respected in love. And it shows that in ecclesiastical and material affairs the community was the highest power and the role of the Bishop was one of pastor.

Bishop the pastor and Community the sheep

The first chapter of Varttamanappustakam reveals a theology of the pastor and the sheep: The community which is the agent of action, which acts through its local and general assem-

blies is the sheep whose shepherd is the Bishop. The role of the bishop is not to rule but to lead and to shepherd his people.

He says, "The archbishop of Cranganore was the proper Pastor of the Malabar Church and he had the divine jurisdiction over it. The members of the Malabar Church were obliged to obey and acknowledge him as their Pastor in accordance with the divine and natural laws. The bishop at Verpoly was only a mediator appointed by the Pope. If, by reason of ignorance the sheep or by that of inexperience the archbishop, there arose any misunderstandg between the archbishop, the mediator was to help and to care for these Churches..... In this way the sheep would be protected from abandoning the true path of their good pasture".²¹ This simile of the Pastor, sheep and Pasture is not simply a literary form. The very Malayalam words used are significant. The word for Pastor is "*Itayan*". And the diocese is called "*Itavaka*". The Malayalam word "*Itavaka*" means the property of the *Itayan* (Shepherd). Now, this shows the ancient theological tradition of the Malabar Church. The famous Malayalam MSS of the statutes of the Diocese of Angamale of 1606 written in Malayalam has double title. One syriac title written in Malayalam "statutes of the sheepfold of St. Thomas in India" and the Malayalam title "the statutes of the diocese (*Itavaka*) of St. Thomas in Malabar".²² Here the word in syriac for diocese used in the MSS is *Maraisa* that is sheepfold or pasture. The role the Bishop plays in the Church is not one of ruler but one of Pastor shepherding his people. And the whole community is going ahead with the Pastor in love.

In this context it might be very significant to note that the stone inscription at the Church of Paravur of 1556 shows an ecclesiology wherein the Bishop, the local priests and the lay men together form the church community. It acts as a whole. Even the eucharistic celebration is depicted there as the act of the community united under the Bishop with the role and right of each one. The Inscription reads "To lay the foundation stone of the Church of Pattamana Paravur, Bishop Mar Joseph, the local priests and the representatives of the Church assembly, joined together and agreed upon and celebrated the

21. V. P. 31-32.

22. Borgiano Indiano 18, Folio 1. Kept in the Apostolic Library of Vatican, Rome. cfr. also Searia Zacharia, Randu Prachuna Gadyakrithikal, Changanacherry, 1976.

Mass". It shows the agent of action was the whole community. They joined together and agreed upon. And the word used for eucharistic celebration is also significant. The Malayalam expression is "did the Mass". This shows the eucharistic action. And the subject of the verb is Bishop, priests and representatives of laity together. This shows that in the Malabar tradition, the Church community is united in deciding and acting through the representatives. Hence it is the community acting through the representatives or assemblies that was the ancient ecclesial structure in the Malabar Church.

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Book Review Article

ARE THOMAS CHRISTIANS A HYPHENATED CHURCH?

Reflections on **Resurrection, Life and Renewal**,
by Fr. Varghese Pathikulangara C.M.I.

Reviewing the work of one's own former student is difficult. Teachers tend to be hypercritical about what their students create even long after their student days. But I believe that the doctoral thesis of Fr. Varghese Pathikulangara is of crucial importance in the quest for self-identity of the Indian church of St. Thomas which in the course of history was given several different labels by different people. The main part of the book is an English translation from Syriac of the Chaldean divine office for Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday given as a second volume; it is preceded by a first volume consisting of a historical introduction on the Indian church of St. Thomas which the author designates as the "Chaldeo-Indian Church", a running commentary on the different parts of divine office and a chapter of synthesis and proposals. The translation of the text is accurate and readable. The commentary is of unequal quality: the reflections on the Biblical parts of the services are based most-

ly on the commentaries of modern Western scholars like R.E. Brown, C. Stuhlmueller, H. Cazelles, M. McNamara, P. Heinisch, A. Weiser and S. Lyonnet. No much effort is made to bring out the the penetrating insights of the Syrian Fathers on the sacred texts.

Often reference is made to the *Psitta* version of the Bible and the author complains that against the Syrian tradition of using the Psitta text in readings there are many today including even prelates in the Malabar church who do not care for that ancient Syriac version of the Bible (p. 36, n.23). It is true that when the Latins had prescribed the Latin vulgate version of St. Jerome as the only official accepted text the Syrians took refuge in the psitta. Psitta is an old version whose origins are lost in obscure antiquity, and only recently did E.J. Brill of Leiden announced even a critical edition of it. It is very valuable as a tool in the scholarly endeavours in reconstructing the original text of the Old Testament, and also for knowing the history of the ecclesiastical biblical text in the Syrian churches. But as J.P.M. vander Ploeg remarks: "The time of using modern translations of old versions (Greek, Syriac, Latin) as texts of the Bible should be definitely over. Modern scholarship enables us to make translations from the original texts (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek) which reproduce the meaning of the original texts much better than the old, though venerable, versions do. There is only one Bible for all the Christians not several ones"¹.

The commentary on the other parts are simple and as the author himself claims, mystagogical, but not critical. It would be unthinkable for the author to find anything defective or erroneous in the Chaldean tradition. But a critical evaluation of these texts which were composed and finalized mostly in the 12th century in the decadent phase of the Chaldean church would have been valuable. In spite of their wealth of symbolism and the heaping up of Biblical allusions and analogies one upon another, one has to recognize that they are theologically shallow and far inferior to the early Syriac writings by St. Ephrem, Aphraates and others. Composed for the education and edification of the illiterate masses of the times they contain innumerable

1. J. P. M. van der Ploeg, "The Psitta of the Old Testament", *The Malabar Church*, ed. Jacob Vellian, Rome, OCA # 186, 1970 p. 32.

repetitions of the same basic sentiments like fear of death, judgment and hell, sinfulness of man, the anger of heaven, repentance over sins and the constant petition for mercy and pardon. Even on Easter Sunday behind expressions of joy in the *Resurrection, Life and Renewal*, the dominant images presented to the people are "the awfulness of the Lord in the sanctuary", his "voice of terror", our status as "unworthy sinners", the prospect of our "journey coming to a final sudden cease" and the like. In adapting these prayers for the sophisticated public of our times a radical revision and abbreviation of the text may be necessary. But the author is fully right in pointing out that the Chaldean liturgical texts are a rich mine of great treasures for enriching our spirituality. What stands in the way, however, of using them is not their inaccessibility owing to the Syriac language nor "the false propaganda and the apparent glamour and material well-being of the Christian West" (p.242), but the arduous task of adapting them to the life-style of the modern man and the theological sensibilities of the post-Vatican II church.

"The Chaldeo-Indian Church"?

But the book is more controversial by what the author says and implies in his introduction and the concluding synthesis. One of the surprising things in the book is that the author has on his own authority renamed the Thomas Christians of India "the Chaldeo-Indian church": Katherar Thomas Paremmackal in his *Varttamanapustakam* refers frequently to his people as the Malabar Church. In the 19th century the Thomas Christians in their struggle to gain independence from the Latin rule emphasized their links with the Chaldean patriarchate and designated themselves frequently as the Syro-Chaldean Church of Malabar. Rome in an effort to wean them from the Chaldean influence called them "Syro-Malabarians"; but the Thomas Christians in their polemic mood against the Latins reasserted the title "Syro-Chaldean". Father Placid Podipara CMI in his book *The Hierarchy of the Syro-Malabar Church* mentions the titles 'Indo-Chaldean' and Chaldeo-Indian'. Fr. Pathikulangara who in his earlier book had chosen the Indo-Chaldean title, at the advice of his "friends and students" has now changed the title 'Indo-Chaldean into 'Chaldeo-Indian'.

We have to question seriously the appropriateness of this hyphenated title for our church. Though from the third century

the Indian Church of St. Thomas received from time to time bishops from the church of Chaldea, and these bishops naturally brought with them their own liturgical practices and some liturgical books, and for some time the Indian church was under the actual rule of the Chaldean patriarch, the apostolic church of St. Thomas was never a part of the Chaldean church, which itself secured its independence from the Antiochian church only in the 5th century. Fr. Pathikulangara tries to justify the addition of "Chaldeo" with the ingenious explanation that the semitic term Chaldee, according to the Oxford Dictionary means Aramaic as used in the Old Testament books (p.25). He also gratuitously assumes that the individual church of St. Thomas Christians was "born of a synthesis of two cultures-Semitic and Dravidian or Chaldean and Indian" (*Ibid*). The arguments to show that the Chaldeans and the Dravidians of South India were the same or similar in culture are too farfetched to carry any conviction. Worse still is the effort to show that the Thomas Christians are closely linked with the Jews. The only piece of evidence is a statement by a Jewish author of the 16th century about the existence of Jewish groups in several of the places where St. Thomas the Apostle is said to have established his seven churches. If these Jewish colonies dated from the dispersion of Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem or earlier, it may show that St. Thomas could have easily come to India. But it in no way proves that the Christians of St. Thomas, who according to tradition were mostly Hindu converts, had any close links with them. If at all anything, it proves right the opposite since these endogamous Jewish groups kept themselves isolated from others through millennia, even to the twentieth century when most of them returned to the newly constituted kingdom of Israel. "Chaldean" definitely refers to the geographical Chaldean church. So to call Thomas Christians 'Indo Chaldeans' or worse 'Chaldeo-Indians' is more obnoxious than calling Catholics 'Roman-Catholics'.

Besides, it makes a bad impression in our independent India that the Christian community appears as an appendage of a foreign church. The right approach in the matter is shown by Metropolitan Cyril Mar Baselios who in his paper at the CBCI meeting at Tiruchirappally, 1982, refers to his church as the "Malankara" Catholic church, dropping from the traditional title the "Syro" and the hyphen. His counterpart from the Malabar church, on the other hand, does not seem to be able to make

up his mind between "Chaldeo-Indian" and "Syro Malabar" as a title for his church:

The Individuality of the Church of St. Thomas

Fr. Pathikulangara puts forth his own personal opinion as a "new step in ecclesiology and in theological thinking itself" that the distinctive character of an individual apostolic church must be mainly the proper Christ-experience of the founding apostle, of St. Peter in Rome and St. Paul and St. James in the churches founded by them. Hence the unique character of St. Thomas and his Christ experience found solely from St. John's references to him in the Gospel "enter into the very constitution and expression of the individual church" of St. Thomas. The Validity and value of this line of thinking is quite doubtful. One can seriously question whether in the references to St. Thomas St. John was actually trying to give us a pen picture of the apostle or only using him as a character in the dramatic presentation of the Christ event. Besides, the apostles were not preaching themselves but only Christ; They did not preach a partial and subjective experience of Christ either, since their own personal witness was complemented by other New Testament witnesses both by word of mouth and in writing. Vatican Council II in its description of the distinctive features of individual churches takes their distinctions from their actual existence: they differ by their liturgy, spirituality, theology system of administration and other aspects of the ministry of salvation.

In order to claim its legitimate autonomy, rights and privileges equal to those of other apostolic churches, an individual apostolic church does not have to prove the purity of its liturgical tradition, distinctiveness of its spirituality, and its missionary spirit. The basis for its claim for the right to exist, to care for its people and preach the Gospel freely along with other churches, is its own unbroken history deriving not from another mother church but from an Apostle of Christ. This natural right was violated when Rome divided the whole of India into Latin dioceses and restricted the Thomas Christians to Kerala. What we have to point out is that even the Roman See is bound by natural law; the rights and privileges of an apostolic church are not a gift of Rome but derive from its apostolic origin. This practical approach to the concrete historical reality of a church is tersely stated by the Council of Constantinople of 879-80 which reestablished communion between the Patriarch and the See of Rome:

Each church has certain ancient customs it has received as its heritage. One should not quarrel or dispute on account of these. Let the church of Rome observe its own way of doing things; this is legitimate. But also let the church of Constantinople keep certain customs which have come to it from the distant past. Let it be the same in the other sees of the East...Would not many things have been avoided if the churches had followed this rule in the past?²

Vatican Council II also takes a practical approach to the individual churches when it states:

This Sacred Synod solemnly declares that the Churches of the East while keeping in mind the necessary unity of the whole Church, have the power to govern themselves according to their own Principles, since these are better suited to the temperament of their faithful and better adapted to foster the good of souls.³

The principal reason why the spiritual heritage of the Eastern Churches have to be kept intact is not that it belongs to the beauty and fullness of Christian tradition, but that their disciplines are sanctioned by the Holy Fathers, the synods and even ecumenical councils. Our tradition is our own. Even when elements were borrowed or adapted from the outside the decision was made by our holy fathers and councils. If mistakes were made in the past it is for us to correct them and not for some one else to dictate modifications.

The Goals of Liturgical Renewal

Fr. Pathikulangara quotes with approval the comprehensive directive of Vatican Council II regarding liturgical renewal:

All members of the Eastern Churches ... are to aim always at a more perfect knowledge and practice of their rites, and if they have fallen away due to circumstances of times and persons, they are to strive to return to their ancestral traditions.⁴

2. Mansi. XVII, 489.

3. *Unitatis Redintegratio* § 16.

4. *Orientalium Eccl.* (OE) § 6

The tradition of each particular church or rite must remain whole and entire and ... adapt its own way of life to the needs of different times and places⁵.

But when it comes to applying these principles to our Rite, the author is concerned only about removing the Latin elements added to our worship. Most of these additions have already been removed in the recent reforms and Fr. Pathikulangara mentions specifically only the borrowed devotions and prayers which are outside the main body of the liturgy. But he completely ignores two specific areas of necessary reform if our liturgical life must attain its Christian health and authenticity.

First is the liturgical distortion of which the Chaldean church itself was a victim starting from the 5th century A. D. Liturgy is the celebration of our salvation achieved by the death and resurrection of Christ, our God and Saviour, continued in the Church with him, through him and in him. But as a result of an over-reaction against the Arian heresy the whole attention in worship was turned away from the Risen Lord to his divinity, and since the divinity of Christ can be seen only in the triune Godhead, to the Trinity. The prayers that were directed "through Christ our Lord" came to be addressed to "Lord of all, Father, Son and Holy Spirit". "Through Christ" was supposed to imply a certain subordinationism, by making the Son inferior to the Father. Christ's divinity is so much emphasized that he is not presented as our leader and bringer of salvation, but as the appearance of God in the world to receive our adoration and to teach us by word and example. Nestorianism which divided Christ into two persons, one the Son of God and the other a mere man, the son of Mary, was the direct consequence of this over reaction to Arianism. When the excommunicated and exiled Nestorius was received by the Chaldean church as a saint and as a champion against the Alexandrian heresy of Monophysitism, the liturgy too came to be deeply influenced by this radical shift in thinking. The Eucharist which was instituted and celebrated in the familial context of a meal as the banquet of our salvation became the mysterious presentation of the Godhead and was there-

fore in reverence and awe moved behind the curtains into the sanctuary, a sort of restored holy of holies of the Jews. The ordinary layman was considered too unworthy to see the mysteries or even to listen to the Anaphora of the Mass. Only the endings were said loudly enough to be heard by those standing outside the sanctuary. The clergy was given an exalted position equal to that of angels! Since the Son of God is the second person of the Trinity of God the emphasis in Christian celebration and piety shifted from the Resurrection to the Trinity. In the Mass itself attention focussed more and more on the sufferings of Christ by which he had atoned for our sins: In the Mass we see "Jesus who is being led to death on our account. On the paten and in the cup He goes forth with the deacon to suffer... The altar is a symbol of our Lord's tomb, without doubt; and the bread and wine are the body of our Lord which was embalmed and buried...", says Narsai, who was one of the agents and immediate witnesses of this Nestorian transformation of the Chaldean liturgy⁶. Jesus, the man is said in the liturgy to be a *juqna*, an icon or image of the Son of God; this could be said about any human being since man was created in the image of God. Fr. Pathi-kulangara struggles to justify this expression used by the Chaldean writers like Babbei (pp. 245-50). But all such explanations cannot succeed in proving that the Nestorians were not Nestorians; we have no obligation to defend the errors of the Chaldean church. But more important is the damage done to liturgical spirituality. If our liturgical tradition is to be restored to its original purity it is not enough to go back to the 11th or even to the 6th century texts; we have to go back to the spirit of the pre-Nestorian stage to which the core of the Anaphora of the Apostles, which we use in the Mass, still remains faithful.

A second important task of liturgical renewal passed over in silence by the book is that of adapting the liturgical "way of life to the needs of different times and places", namely making our liturgy relevant to the attitudes, thinking and needs of our Indian people. It would seem that according to our Chaldean purists the best way to defend our identity as Thomas Christians and

to press the rights of our apostolic church against the Latins would be to abdicate our responsibility for our liturgical tradition and hide behind the Chaldeans and keep that tradition frozen in the form we received it and defend every element of it with a fanatic's zeal. But the sign of a living church with an authentic self identity is a critical responsibility for what one is and what one has received from the past, in order to correct the mistakes and to move ahead. As A. Baumstark states, the high vocation of the historian of Liturgy is "to investigate and describe the origins and variations of the changing forms of the enduring substance of eternal value"⁷. The Chaldean church was a very dynamic church which readily, and sometimes too readily, changed its liturgical forms according to the needs of the times. It became fossilized only towards the end of the first millennium of Christianity. But the prayers and forms of the liturgy are by their very nature subject to a process of continuous evolution. "Differences of race and language and the peculiar genius of each people are, for these liturgical forms the factors which necessarily govern their variations. Indeed, liturgical forms are so intimately bound up with the external history of the world and of the Church and with the development of the religious sentiment, itself conditioned by historical happenings, that they are constantly being subjected to great modifications"⁸. Unfortunately our liturgy has not undergone any considerable inculturation in the Indian context all these centuries. All the tortuous argumentation of Fr. Pathikulangara and others to prove the close relation between the Chaldeans and Dravidians, between Jews and Malabar Christians is to show that the Chaldean tradition is Indian in the fullest sense (p. 245). So there is no further need for inculturation in the Indian context. The author quotes the words of Pope John Paul II, "this Eastern and authentically Indian Church" (ibid n. 12). Yes, our church of the Thomas Christians is authentically Indian. But its liturgy lacks Indian authenticity and is badly in need of an Indian inculturation.

Ecclesiology

In spite of all his insistence on the autonomy of an apostolic church, what lies behind Fr. Pathikulangara's thinking is a pre Vatican II Latin ecclesiology. The distinction between East and West is not, as he claims, that of an ecclesiology based on the Revelation of God in Scriptures (the East) and one that begins with the analysis of creatures (the West) (p. 275). Both in the East and in the West there were different ecclesiologies both "from above" and "from below". What characterised the

7. A. Baumstark, *Comparative Liturgy* p. 27

8. M. Solovey OSBM, *Eastern Liturgical Theology* p. 118

pre-Vatican II Latin thinking was the idea of the church as a single Platonic sort of universal idea "concretized or formed and developed as different churches" (p. 35). The Bishop of Rome would be the one head of that one universal church and the local bishops would be sort of vicars under him. But Vatican II moved away from such Platonic thinking on the church. Though open and subject to the universal pastoral guidance of the Pope, the bishops are not his vicars, but vicars and ambassadors of Christ.⁹ For the East Syrian tradition led by Ss. Ephrem and Aphraates both from Revelation and from human experience the real church which is the locus of salvation is the local community gathered around the Eucharist under the leadership of the bishop, and the universal church is only the communion of these local churches. Fr. Pathikulangara spends three full pages to show that the "All India Seminar on Church in India Today" held at Bangalore in 1969 has no "binding force" because it has not been "juridically accepted by the Church" (pp. 19-21). By the Church he means the Roman curia! This is typical of the extreme Roman juridicism reflected in the whole book. Whoever claimed a "legislative" or "juridical" power for a national "seminar"? A gathering of all the bishops, important theologians, specialists and representative laymen that reflected on the actual problems of the people of India today was a celebration of the Indian Local Church. The sad sequel to that seminar is that the Latin prelates did not care to fulfil even the minimal promises they made regarding the thousands of Syro Malabarians living in their dioceses! Similarly, Fr. Pathikulangara makes a sharp opposition between the prayers of the people and the official approval of the Church authority that makes those prayers liturgical, between liturgical worship and the prayers and devotions of the people with no effort to show the close relation between them. Even the most sacred texts of the liturgical books will not become liturgy unless actually used in worship by the People of God.

The most outrageous suggestion he makes in this juridicist trend of thinking is that all our Malabar bishops should be taken as a body to Rome and given a course there in liturgical catechesis! (p. 292). Here he forgets completely the legitimate autonomy of the apostolic church of St. Thomas. Just as the Latins illegitimately latinized us, they should again in the same high-handed manner make us pure Chaldeans! Unfortunately these Roman scholars who are to impart this catechesis for our church have not even a tourist's acquaintance with our church or its traditions. As Adrian Nocent OSB one of the advisors of the thesis readily admits, our Church "is not sufficiently known in

the West, among liturgiologists and even experts" (front flap of the book). The little they learned about us they learned from their Indian students.

In summary, I regret to state that Fr. Pathikulangara's book, *Resurrection, Life and Renewal* represents a subtle, but two-fold, colonialism: It wants to make the apostolic church of St. Thomas a mere appendage and extension of the Chaldean church in liturgy and practice. For this it wants to put us again at the mercy of the whims and fancies of a few Western liturgists who have a rather romanticist idea of Eastern Rites and would like to make us a museum-piece of the Chaldean liturgical tradition at its most decadent stage.

Bangalore

J. B. Chethimattam

2. A REVIEW OF THE REPORT OF THE CBCI GENERAL BODY MEETING 1982

The present review is based on the SAR news bulletins sent to us during the days of the meeting as well as the official Report published by the CBCI Centre, New Delhi, 1982. Here care has been taken to avoid what has already been said in a previous review of the CBCI Meeting, 1976 (cf. *Jeevadhara* 35: Sept.-Oct. 1976, pp. 462-466).

After reading the inaugural address by the CBCI President, Lawrence Cardinal Picachy, one would have naturally expected discussion of some of the major problems facing the nation as a whole, such as poverty, dependence, oppression and exploitation of vast majority of our people, corruption of administration from top to bottom, bonded labour and child labour, neglect of rural areas wherein 'India's heart beats'. We could hardly find, among the "Major Pastoral Concerns of the CBCI", such extremely relevant and important topics as: 'Gospel to the poor', re-thinking our educational policy and re-directing our educational work, updating the Church structures, relating liturgy to our life situation and life experiences and thus making it a living one, recognizing the important role of the Laity in the Church. True, Caste was discussed at some length, but at the end the bishops satisfied themselves with a platitudinous statement on caste, but without any edge, without any definite programme for eradicating it. The statement says that 'caste, with its consequent effects of discrimination and "caste mentality", has no place in Christianity'. We fully agree if it means what the ideal should be. But in actual practice it has a

dominant place in the Church. In Kerala, for instance, there are, among Catholics, Syrians and Latins: among Syrians, Nordhists and Suddhists; among Latins, group of the 'Seven Hundred' and that of the 'Five Hundred' and what not. There is a group of Catholics who claim to be descendants of Syrian immigrants in Kerala in some remote past and form a separate and exclusive race. Naturally they have their own attitude to evangelization, and converts to Christianity are never admitted to their ranks for fear of their losing purity of blood. There is another group who pride themselves on their descent from the Nambudiris converted by St. Thomas the Apostle and, as the highest caste, look others with disdain. But, thank God, they do not go to the extent of denying to themselves intermarriages with others. Separate dioceses have been awarded to the group of the 'Seven Hundred' and that of the 'Five Hundred'. There are even pockets of one group within the bounds of the diocese of the other. Apart from the doubtful historicity of such claims, they are causing a standing scandal to which we are daily witnesses. This, however, in no way implies that there is perfect conformity within each group; unhealthy competitions raise their ugly heads among the dioceses of the same group. Caste and caste mentality are not confined to Kerala or to the other South Indian States, but are prevalent throughout India, including the North and have hold on both the clergy and the laity, but more on the former.

In none of the issues have our Bishops evinced any unity of vision and purpose. This has been most evident when they came to discuss Latin-Oriental relationships. The spokesmen of the three Rites waxed incredibly rhetorical, vying with one another to establish their points in fifty-, eighty-, and seventy-minute-speeches not without tenuous and sometimes specious arguments and exaggerated statements. To an impartial observer, Chaldean (Malabar), Antiochean (Malankara) and Roman (Latin) Liturgies for which the Bishops pleaded are equally foreign to us Indians. They are all but relic of the past, unrelated to a great extent to the life situations of today.

Is Christianity a cultic religion? Jesus was not a priest in the traditional sense of the term. True, he preached in the synagogues, but people regarded him as a prophet which he really was. Nowhere in the Gospels have we an explicit record of institution by Jesus of any sacrament except the Eucharist. (Jesus himself did not baptize (Jn 4:2) and the apostolic commission (Mt 28:19) is interpreted by modern exegetes as a clear presentation of what the apostolic Church understood itself to be.) Now Jesus celebrated the Eucharist in the form of a common meal. What fossilization and mystification did come later, clouding its clear message of fellowship and sharing, service and self-

sacrifice! We know that 'apostolic experience' is a norm of *our own* experience of God in Jesus Christ. But here Rite is considered the be-all and end-all and a receptacle, as it were, of apostolic experience, pure and entire, and is contrived to distinguish between true sons and adopted sons from among catholics—so jarring on our christian ears! One would be tempted to ask: 'Jesus I know and Thomas I know, but what is it that you are talking about?'

Each of the spokesmen had something to say about 'juridical structure' in the Church: "Restricting Syro-Malabar and Malankara Churches to a corner by juridical structure is a tragic situation." Again, some were for and others against 'double jurisdiction'. We have had occasion to criticize the present structure of the Church (cf. *Jeevadhara* 58: July-August 1980, pp. 286-301). Division of the Church into parishes, dioceses etc. has been abused to build up a pyramidal *power* structure. Power is characterized by the spirit of domination and is always jealous of any encroachment. Only by breaking this power structure shall we be true to Christ: "You know that among the pagans the rulers lord it over them.... This is not to happen among you, No. Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave" (Mt 20: 25-27). On the contrary the above division should have helped to build a *church from below* which is being hopefully and successfully tried in the 'basic ecclesial communities' of Latin America. I may add that the traditional structure of the Malabar Church was precisely of that nature (cf. present issue, pp. 312-322). Such churches will not be set against one another. They are communities of love and enjoy freedom of the children of God.

In this connection one of our Bishops' remarks at the meeting deserve some comment and fraternal protest. Bishop Joseph Powathil is reported to have "taken strong exception to some statements in the Seminar on the Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society". It was followed by an admonition to his colleagues that "Seminars are to be guided and carefully prepared . . . by the Bishop concerned". "Merely lighting the traditional lamp and inaugurating the seminar" won't do. Fr. D.S. Amalorpavadas is said to have retorted: "Nobody can manipulate fair and frank discussion in a seminar". It is interesting to note that this was a research seminar on an extremely important and urgent topic to which, I was told, thirty three of our Bishops were invited, but only two of them had the good will to attend it. It was an assembly mostly of experts in the different fields connected with the topic, viz. S. Scripture, Theology, Ecclesiology, Sociology, Psychology, etc. I was an invitee to the Seminar and I could only admire the way the two Bishops

behaved. They never stood in the way of free and frank discussion nor could they in an assembly of experts. Fr. Amalorpavadas was the coordinator of the seminar and a score to his organising capacity, profound knowledge and shrewd ways of achieving his purpose. He always took pains to remain within the structures of the church. To some of us, he did not seem to be quite as good as his word about 'frank and free discussion. He had his way of getting persons of his choice elected to the different committees and expunged something (to be definite, our group's evaluation of the Nunciature) from the findings of workshops before presenting it to the general assembly. I am saying this precisely to show that Bishops like Joseph Powathil have no reason to quarrel with him. At the same time we cannot agree with Bishop Powathil when he says: "seminars have to be *guided* . . ." (italics mine). With all deference may I ask what his conception of a Bishop's authority is, what of truth and of freedom in the Church. Vatican II's teaching is explicit: "all the faithful, clerical and lay, *possess* a lawful freedom of enquiry and of thought and the freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about those matters in which they enjoy competence." (GS, no. 62) (italics mine.)

Our Bishops were concerned about the minority rights. I think it is high time that we forwent them and threw in our lot with the society at large. It is also good that we look into ourselves whenever wrong is done to us by the larger community. Do we evangelize for the coming of the Kingdom of God or for an increase in the membership of the Church? Denial of recognition to St. John's Medical College in Bangalore has been a subject of our serious complaint. But does anyone of our Bishops know what has been happening there? I, for one, till most recently, considered St. John's a paragon among all Medical Colleges, where candidates were chosen only on merit and the best service was rendered without the least shade of corruption. But I have been a bit disillusioned by those who know the inside story. We have to mend our own houses. Here particular mention must be made of eliminating a candid confession on the agenda of the meeting: "We must confess also that the deeds of the Church have not always matched her words." The motion for elimination was proposed by Bishop Januarius. Set against this in clear contrast is the humble but magnanimous confession of guilt by Vatican II (cf. DH, art. 12).

The Apostolic Pro-Nuntio to India, Archbishop A. Caccia-villan, in his address to the Bishops at the inaugural session expressed his "personal interest in the affairs concerning the Laity". So naturally we should have expected a thorough discussion and recognition of the important role of the Laity in the Church.

There have been several references concerning them, e. g. in the inaugural address, that "lay leadership..... should be encouraged". Archbishop Antony Padiyara expressed concern about "the emergence of fissiparous tendencies, within the Church such as the rift between priests and laity". Archbishop Leobard D' Souza made a significant observation: "We are deeply concerned that in many places catechists are not treated and taken into confidence by Bishops and priests as autonomous co-workers in the Lord's vineyard". But the reaction to his sincere concern contrived to reduce autonomous co-workers to the status of employees of Bishops and priests. Fr. Remigius, Deputy Director of Caritas India, made a few pertinent remarks on too much clericalism in our projects which, he said, "should not only be for the people, but also of the people and by the people". He called for "collective responsibility and decision-making". But we do not know how the Bishops reacted. Archbishop Hubert D' Rosario pleaded for lay representation at the CBCI meeting: "If lay people could be in the Vatican Council, why not here in the CBCI meeting?" The subsequent discussions, however, landed these proposals nowhere. In fact, the matter was never seriously discussed. As long as the role of the laity is not recognized the power-structure will remain to the great detriment of the Church.

Finally a word about "the most noteworthy publication" (SAR) of the CBCI Secretariate: The Catholic Directory of India 1980 with its supplement of names and addresses of priests. Random references to this publication revealed how very defective and incomplete it is. The present writer had a series of correspondence with Fr. A. Nazareth who was entrusted with its compilation. He was requested to collect data also from sources other than diocesan representatives and check them; also to publish separate lists of major seminaries, international and national journals etc. His attention was drawn to some of the defects of a previous edition of the Directory, e. g. no mention was made any where of St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam; the wrong entry on our International Review of Theology *Jeevadhara*, as a Malayalam monthly. Such mistakes are not corrected in the 1980 Directory. As for the supplement, in a few pages I read, names of so many priests were found missing, e. g. Frs. Thomas Aykara, Thomas Mampra, George Koonthanam, Abraham Koothottil, Kurien Kunnumpuram, Swami Vikrant, not to speak of mine. The compilation of the Directory should pass into more competent hands, if it has to be a standard work of reference.